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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 102

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No. 12

Divine Wisdom

THE BHAGAVAN AS THE ONE GOAL OF ALL ASPIRANTS

(Sage Kapila to his mother Devahūti)

इत्येतत्कथितं गुर्वि ज्ञानं तद्ब्रह्मदर्शनम्।
येनानुबुध्यते तत्त्वं प्रकृतेः पुरुषस्य च॥

O venerable Mother! I have expounded the doctrine that leads to the realization of Brahman. By grasping this, the truth about Prakriti and Purusha will be gradually understood.

ज्ञानयोगश्च मन्निष्ठो नैर्गुण्यो भक्तिलक्षणः।
द्वयोरप्येक एवार्थो भगवच्छब्दलक्षणः॥

What is known as Bhagavan is the common object sought by those who follow the discipline of knowledge based on the scriptures, and by those who follow the discipline of whole-hearted devotion to Me (Nirguna Bhakti).

यथेन्द्रियैः पृथग्द्वारैरर्थो बहुगुणाश्रयः।
एको नानेयते तद्वद्भगवान् शास्त्रवर्त्मभिः॥

Just as one object with various attributes is seen differently through the different senses (say, a flower fragrant to the nose, soft to the touch, and beautiful to the eye),—even so the one Bhagavan is viewed and interpreted by different philosophies and scriptural writings in the light of their particular traditions. (He is one and the same, but each religion or philosophy seeks to interpret Him in consonance with its own tradition and concepts.)

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 3.32.31–33

Work and Worship

What is the way to perfection? This has been a great mystery to every spiritual aspirant. Some lay stress on devotion to God, singing his holy Name and divine glories, and visiting places of pilgrimage. Some others equally stress that we should wholeheartedly devote ourselves to his mission and do the Lord's work. While the aim in both these methods is to be somehow united with God at every moment of our existence on earth and abnegate one's self, yet the controversy exists because some are inclined to devotional practices and some others are active by temperament. When we turn to the pages of the Bible we find Lord Jesus declaring:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.¹

And we also come across the passage

For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.²

It thus appears that God wishes that we perform all acts and lead our lives in accordance with the divine will. But what is the will of God? Do we have a separate will of our own? How are we to find out God's will? Swami Ramakrishnananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, once told Sister Devamata how by filling oneself with the presence of God and thus getting rid of ego

one opens up the way for God to function through us as if we were instruments in his hands:

It is the greatest relief when we get rid of egotism. It is as if a heavy burden rolled off. At once all doubts and fears, anxieties and troubles disappear. When the 'I' is gone, nothing remains but God or Divinity. Let Him exist alone in his glory. Deny ego, it is the cause of all your miseries.

You will have to get rid of this ego, you will have to drive out the first personal pronoun 'I' before you can realize God. God's will is the only will in the whole universe and your little will is only a small reflection of the universal will and only exists because that great will exists.

Bring God inside yourself. This is the way to forget the ego. Feel His presence in your heart. The moment you feel that presence, you will not have to drive away the ego. It will disappear of itself. Selfishness will go. Your little glory will be lost in the infinite glory of God.³

When God incarnates himself on earth, he guides humanity so it can find its way to spiritual fulfilment. In his advent as Jesus Christ, he mentions, in addition to the Sermon on the Mount, two commandments that we are called upon to keep. When the Sad'-du-ces had been put to silence by Jesus, the Pharisees gathered together with the intention of entangling Jesus in his

1. Matthew, 7:21.

2. Matthew, 12:50.

3. Sister Devamata, *Days in an Indian Monastery*, California, Ananda Ashrama, 1927, pp. 24-5.

own talks:

Then one of them, *which was* a lawyer, asked *him a question*, tempting him, and saying,

Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.⁴

Clearly the first commandment is clothed in the language of the devotee. To love God alone at all moments wholeheartedly letting nothing else intrude. To be Buddha-like in one's determination to call upon God in the privacy of one's inner chamber, is the innermost desire of every devotee. However, the second commandment calls upon us to love our neighbour as ourselves. This appeals to some who are active by temperament. However, in this commandment there is no restriction on who is our *neighbour*. In fact, what is meant by the word 'neighbour' depends upon our horizon of vision, how broad and all-inclusive it is. It is possible to include all humanity under the term *neighbour* or to include just our little selves. With the extended understanding, with the Vedantic vision that all that exists is Brahman, the two commandments reach a meeting-point. As beautifully expressed by the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, 'nobody is a stranger, the whole world is your very own'.

The first commandment is especially suitable when God comes down into our midst as an incarnation of the age. This is so

because he is there right before our vision, if only we have the sight to perceive. The second commandment is an equally effective way when God, the bridegroom, leaves our midst, as it inevitably happens one day or the other. Then is a period of vigil and fasting, of strict discipline, of pouring out oneself in the service of the divinity immanent in all beings.

In the Bible we come across a very interesting event. This concerns two sisters Martha and Mary, whose brother Lazarus, when dead for three or four days already, had miraculously been called to life by Jesus. Mary was highly devoted and was waiting anxiously for his arrival. As Jesus was to arrive at their house, Martha was heavily engaged in making all preparations. Which of the two, Martha or Mary, had chosen rightly? One was pining in expectation of the arrival of the Lord and the other was exerting herself for his entertainment upon his arrival. Let us see the verdict of Jesus:

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.⁵

It is very clear that Jesus, being in flesh and blood, it was only proper that devotees spend their time in his presence and in eager expectation of his presence amidst them.

4. Matthew, 22:35-40.

5. St. Luke, 10:38-42.

And in so doing Mary had rightly chosen.

A devotee came one day with flowers to offer at the feet of the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi. As the man was a stranger, the Holy Mother covered herself fully with a wrapper and sat on a cot with her legs hanging down. The ever-watchful Golap-Ma thought that the devotee would offer the flowers and then take his leave. But to her dismay she found that the devotee was worshipping the Holy Mother to his heart's content with all elaborate rituals unmindful of the inconvenience caused to the Holy Mother who had by then started to perspire. With her usually loud voice Golap-Ma said to the devotee, 'Are you there before a wooden image that you should invoke her with all your ceremonies?...'. The idea is that when the Holy Mother was in flesh and blood, it was sufficient to be at her feet establishing the relationship of a child to its mother.⁶

Let us consider another very interesting event from the Bible which is pregnant with meaning.

Then Jesus six days before the pass-over came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

There they made him a supper; and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him.

Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag and bare what was put therein.

Then said Jesus, Let her alone; against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.⁷

In the above narrative we see that the ointment was to be sold and the money 'given to the poor' but Mary had used it to anoint the holy feet of Jesus. Which was the correct thing to do—to serve the poor or to serve God himself? There may be varied answers. When the blessed Lord is before one's very eyes, it is only right to give him one's all. Indeed everything *belongs* to him and *comes from him*. Thus, the whole of existence is his. We are especially fortunate if we are given the privilege to serve God with what he has mercifully given us. So, again we see that Mary did right in anointing the holy feet of Jesus with the ointment. However, the scene changes when God incarnate is no more physically with us. For then, we are expected to live up to both the commandments: To love the Lord with all our being and to serve our neighbours as our very self, seeing the Lord in them.

We find in the Bible that Jesus lays down this service to our neighbour as the *criterion* for screening between the faithful and the heathen. He says:

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

For I was an hungred and ye gave me

6. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1977), p. 382.

7. St. John, 12:1-8.

meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungry, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink?

When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*?

Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you. Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.⁸

The above narrative clearly points out that God is the Indweller. And he comes to us in many forms requiring service in many ways. Highlighting that this is our great privilege, Swami Vivekananda says:

The poor and the miserable are for our salvation, so that we may serve the Lord, coming in the shape of the diseased, coming in the shape of the lunatic, the leper, and the sinner! Bold are my words; and let me repeat that it is the greatest privilege in our life that we are allowed to serve the Lord in all these shapes.⁹

In the life of Sri Ramakrishna we find an incident similar to that Martha and Mary but much more stimulating.¹⁰ On a particular day, after visiting Nanda Bose, Sri Ramakrishna was to arrive at the house of a Brah-

min lady who was grief-stricken on account of the death of her daughter. We can well imagine the grief she was suffering from. This brāhmani had a sister, also a widow, and brothers who lived in the same house with their families. The brāhmani had been busy all day long making arrangements to receive Sri Ramakrishna. Extremely restless because Sri Ramakrishna had not arrived yet, she was going out of the house every few minutes, even as she was making the preparations, to see whether he was within sight. Many thoughts passed through her mind. He [Sri Ramakrishna] had promised to come from the house of one Nanda Bose. Could it be that he was not going to keep his promise on account of some delay? She even went to the extent of going to the house of Nanda Bose to see what the matter was.

Meanwhile however Sri Ramakrishna arrived and the brāhmani, came a little while later, back from the house of Nanda Bose. Upon her return, the brāhmani saluted the Master with great devotion.

She was beside herself with joy. She did not know what to say. In a half-choked voice she said: 'This joy is too much for me. Perhaps I shall die of it. Tell me, friends, how shall I be able to live? I did not feel such a thrill even when Chandi, my daughter, used to visit the house accompanied by liveried footmen, with armed guards lining both sides of the street. Oh! Now I have no trace of my grief at her death. I was afraid he [Sri Ramakrishna] would not come. Then I thought that, if that happened, I should throw into the Ganges all the things I had arranged for his reception and entertainment. I should not speak to him any more. If he visited a place, I should go there, look at him from a distance, and then come away. Let me go and tell everybody how happy I am....

(Continued on page 773)

8. Matthew, 25:33-40.

9. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 3, p. 247). [Hereafter, C.W.].

10. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994), pp. 822-3.

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

The first thirty-two *mantras* covered so far aim at a philosophical understanding of the oneness of the universe, however diverse it may appear to be. In the first section of the second Muṇḍaka is described *aparā-vidyā*—all that is known about the origin of external and internal nature perceived through the five senses and the mind. In the second section the teacher takes up the *parā-vidyā viśaya* relating to the essence of the universe, the highest common factor in all things. *Parā-vidyā* is a journey *within*, a process of being, an evolution towards the knowledge and awareness of our true original nature. So, techniques are now given to find out that Reality. As all that is perceived is that very Reality in the garb of various names-forms-utilities, so *aparā-* and *parā-vidyās* are not two distinct, parallel, never-meeting streams; they both point to the one Source within us. Therefore, we are not to think that *aparā-vidyā* will never lead us to *parā-vidyā*, the spiritual sciences. That is why in India, all kinds of knowledge are called scriptures (*śāstras*) and are understood to be means of realization (*mukti śāstras*). Any activity—physical or mental—of man, if done correctly and with dedication will lead to the ultimate goal of life.

From the thirty-third *mantra* importance is given to finding out the Absolute deep within us. Who am I? We find the simplest answer to be elusive: we start by identifying ourselves with our names, but name is merely a means to interact with the world. We say, 'my name', meaning that my 'name' is something I possess just as I possess other things. My 'name' is not myself; it merely designates me. Then again, I am not

the body or the senses which are also things I possess. A person's 'is-ness' is always whole even in spite of the development of defectiveness of the body or the senses. As the purpose of this chapter is to tell us who 'I am' in the Absolute sense, it is termed the chapter on *sādhana*. At our present stage we cannot say that we are the Atman or Brahman, that we are *Saccidānanda*, *Śivo'ham*. But on that account, should our nature remain elusive all the time? No. The *parā-vidyā viśaya* is to reveal the *Akṣara Puruṣa*. The search for It is through *aparokṣa-anubhūti*, direct realization or experience, for It is *sva-samvedya caitanya*, Consciousness that is self-aware. *Parā-vidyā* is *ātma-kendrita*, centralized in the Self; the search for It is performed deep within us, after realizing which we see It all around us as well. The reason for *parā-vidyā* being *ātma-kendrita* is that it is only myself that I can control; I cannot control anything outside. By will-power developed through self-restraint and self-discipline, our senses, thoughts and reactions to the world can be controlled. And this too is possible so long as the ego sense (*asmitā, ahaṁkāra*) is functioning, for, once the ego sense merges in the Absolute, the ego together with its effects comes to an end.

So we see why there is this emphasis on subjective experience and not on objective experience. The emphasis is only natural and not for decrying objective knowledge. That is why a journey within and not without is required to experience *aham brahmāsmi*. For instance, if we are over-sensitive, anything in the world makes us angry. Why? Because our whole being is subject to anger. Similarly, when we are happy,

even unpleasant things are not distasteful to us, because happiness is permeating us. The prismatic mind is so constituted that one particular colour or another is predominant at any moment. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, if one suffers from jaundice, everything is seen to be yellow. Similarly, if one has started the inward journey to find out who is the *guhācara* (one moving in the cavity of the heart), *antar-ātmā*, *Puruṣa*, not by the triune (*tripuṭi*) of *jñātā*, *jñāna*, *jñeya* but by saturating our personality by meditation on our true original nature, then the job is done. *Tripuṭi* of *jñātā*, *jñāna*, *jñeya* (knower, knowledge and the object known) is transcended and the true nature of the world is known. If once through the guidance of the Guru and the blessings of the Divine, the inner *Saccidānanda Svarūpa* is experienced, then the whole being is saturated with that *svarūpa*. Coming down from *samadhi* that person, in the mood of *Śivo'ham*, *aham brahmāsmi*, sees that *Saccidānanda svarūpa* is everywhere. Intuitive experience of Atman within enables the world also to be seen to be of the nature of Atman. If one were to try to know the infinite number of things in the world differing in names, forms and utilities as manifestation of Atman or Brahman (in their *saccidānanda svarūpa*), it would be difficult, if not impossible. That is why so much emphasis is being given towards the idea of *aparokṣa anubhūti*, direct or intuitive or immediate experience of Atman.

This is done by removing the dirt of desire which covers our minds and prevents us from knowing our true original nature. The Upaniṣad now tells us how to remove this dirt or ignorance so that the mind can reflect on the Atman perfectly. The inherent tendency of our mind and senses is to look outside, to give importance to *nāma-rūpa* (name and form). And we try to use this normal method of knowing phenomenal objects, to grasp the transcendental Atman. But *tripuṭi jñāna*—of knower, knowledge and the object known—is in the category of *parokṣa*

anubhūti, indirect and medium-based (mediate) experience; so it will fail to reveal Atman whose knowledge falls in the category of *aparokṣa anubhūti*, direct intuitive (immediate) experience.

आविः संनिहितं गुहाचरं नाम
महत्पदमत्रैतत् समर्पितम्।
एजत्प्राणनिमिषच्च यदेत-
ज्जानथ सदसद्वरेण्यं परं
विज्ञानाद्यद्वरिष्ठं प्रजानाम्॥

Āviḥ saṁnilitam guhācaram nāma
mahat-padam-atraitat samarpitam;
Ejat-prāṇan-nimiṣat-ca yad-etat-
jānatha sad-asad-vareṇyam param
vijñānād-yad-varīṣṭham
prajānām. (II.ii.1)

(It is) self-effulgent, (yet) hidden very well and called 'moving in the cavity secretly' and (It) is the great goal. All that which moves, breathes and winks their eyes are established in It. What That is, know as being and non-being, to be beyond the ordinary knowledge of the creatures (as the object of desire), higher than understanding, and (It is) the eligible and the best of all.

Āviḥ is that which is *dyotanavān*, illuminating and increasing the capacity for knowledge. Āviḥ has the meaning of physical light as well as the light that removes the darkness of ignorance regarding any subject. It specially refers to the light that dispels the ignorance about our own true nature. Through the five senses it gives us knowledge of their respective objects, which, with the functioning of the brain, helps us to identify the objects. This is enlightening and illuminating. The Atman is the source of all these lights but It Itself is not seen with these lights, because It is Light-in-Itself, self-effulgent Consciousness (*svaprakāśa caitanya*), requiring no other aid to reveal It.

Atra etat samarpitam means that all that is going to be listed now is *arpitam* or existing

in It. It is the great abode of all things. The suggestion is that It is the substratum (rope in the rope-snake simile) and on It is projected the imagination of different things (snake).

Another example may shed more light on how It is the abode of all things. If there is a stump of a tree with a piece of cloth wound round it, it will be mistaken for one's beloved, or friend if one is waiting for that person; for a policeman by the thief who is afraid of the policeman; for a dacoit by the householder who fears him. According to the predominant idea in one's mind, each sees the same stump of tree in different ways. Thus, all things and beings come from It by superimposition and go back to It.

Of all the creatures that leave a hoof-mark, that of the elephant is the biggest and it covers the hoof-marks of all other animals.¹ Similarly, the Atman is *mahat-padam*—all imagined things in this illusory world including myself are very securely lodged on that substratum and go back to It. It is the limitless foundation and abode of everything and will draw them up into Itself when knowledge dawns. Those beings projected on It are: all those which fly, i.e., birds and winged creatures; all animate beings having or not having the capacity to blink; as well as inanimate things. What we know to be gross or subtle, being or non-being, is superimposed on It. Thus, all these imaginations are on one existence (rope or stump of a tree) and from It they originate and into It they all go back when their true original nature is known. The *śānta puruṣa* (persons for whom *māyā* has come to an end) pray to that Reality in Its true form.

In the day time one does not see the moon and the stars because of the brilliance of the sun, but it does not mean that the moon and the stars do not exist in the day. They are eternally there, and under appropriate circumstances one will see them.

Similarly, we do not know our own eternal Reality today and we ask, 'ko'ham? who am I?' But if we educate ourselves and create the proper circumstances, Reality will be seen. How It will be seen is explained by means of the *taṭastha lakṣaṇa*: we locate a river which is invisible from where we are by being told that a particular tree which is seen at a distance is situated on the bank of that river. Similarly, the teacher indicates Atman by using the words *āviḥ, mahat-padam*, etc.

This world perceived by us cannot be called a dream because its duration is so prolonged that it continues even life after life, but a time will come when the individual self, now sleeping (to Reality) in beginningless *māyā*, awakes. The life-dream is known to be *śānta* (having an end and not *ananta*, endless). Then, the unborn, non-dreaming, non-sleeping, non-dual Absolute is realized, says the *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā*.² Thus, the purpose of this section is a psychological study of how to extricate oneself from the duality of the world of *māyā*.

That Reality lies deep within, in the cavity of the heart. It is the very essence of our being. It is so well hidden and covered that It is not known to all. We have not been able to unveil It and so we remain in the state of intellectual bankruptcy, unable to define Its nature.

Another method of acquiring knowledge followed in the case of sense-experience is suggested next. We are at home with direct experience (*parokṣa anubhūti*) through the medium of the senses which is based on the three-pronged knowledge characterized by *jñātā, jñāna* and *jñeya*. However, we continuously experience *aparokṣa anubhūti*, di-

2. *Anādi-māyayā supto yadā jīvaḥ prabudhyate
Ajam-anidram-asvapnam-advaitam*

budhyate tadā. (16)

When the individual, sleeping under the influence of beginningless *māyā*, is awakened, then he realizes the birthless, sleepless, dreamless, non-dual (*turiya*).

1. *Hasti-pade sarva-padam nimagnam.*

rect intuitive experience, without any medium (or *tripuṭi* procedure), without our paying any attention to it even! For instance, scriptures say that we are aware that we exist. Is not our awareness of our 'is-ness' or 'am-ness' a self-known experience, without the aid of anything? Even when we go into deep sleep, when the senses are not operating, we remain aware through *aparokṣa anubhūti* of the Self, for on waking we say that we had a wonderful sleep. If we were not existing and aware of the Self in sleep, then how could we say on waking that we had a wonderful sleep? The *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* says that it is natural for the senses to always go outside because the Creator has so created them.³ Due to this natural tendency, we even start to look for God outside! But a mature, stable and wise person, *dhīra puruṣa*, becoming aware of his 'am-ness', *pratyag-ātmānam-aikṣat*, develops the desire to know his true original nature, *anṛtattvam icchan*, desiring immortality. He then shuts his eyes and does not follow the dictate of the senses, disciplines himself and starts the journey within to know his immortal Reality.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that if there is a dark room kept locked even for thousands of years, if anyone at any time goes in with a lamp, the room lights up in a fraction of a second. Since the Atman or Brahman is *āviḥ*, *svaprakāśa caitanya*, It can light up the cavity of one's heart or one's

being instantaneously by directly experiencing It. Wherever there is awareness of Atman, there is effulgence or *cetanā*. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that if one is meditating on *caitanya* in *samadhi*, then can one ever become *acaitanya*, unconscious? One is inwardly conscious though unconscious of things outside. It, the Reality, is *guhācara*, deep within oneself. The Atman is known to be *caitanya svarūpa*, of the nature of Pure Consciousness. It is *sat-asat-vareṇyam*: whether It is subtle or gross, real or apparent, It is adorable, venerable, excellent, most sublime among the sublime and the best of all beings. But, It is beyond the domain of sense perception and intelligence, because intelligence is an attribute of man while Atman is his very nature. Perception and intelligence may or may not exist, there may be gradations in them, but they are temporary. But Atman exists eternally. One who experiences the Atman sheds off all bondage and limitations of ignorance and dwells in Its undiminished majesty and glory: *ayam ātmā brahma, ahaṁ brahmāsmi*.

Finding the Atman is explained in the scriptures as a process of losing one's key and then finding that it is hidden within one's own clothes. The thing is there, only you have lost the sense of awareness regarding it, and someone who knows it tells you where it is. Losing of a necklace worn on the neck when it is not actually lost means losing the awareness of it, and when you get it by regaining the awareness of it, it is called *prāptasya prāpti*, getting that which is already in one's possession. Similarly, Atman is always with us but we have somehow lost awareness of It. So, all that we have to do is to become aware of It. Thus, the teacher first defines the *sādhyā vastu*, the object to be attained, before he takes up the methodology of cognizing It in the cavity of one's heart.

(to be continued)

3. *Parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūstasmiāt-parāñ-paśyati nāntarātmān;*
Kaścit-dhīraḥ pratyag-ātmānam-aikṣad-
āvṛtta-cakṣur-anṛtattvam-icchan

—*Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* II.i.1.

The self-existent Lord destroyed the outgoing senses. Therefore, one sees the outer things and not the inner Self. A rare discriminating man, desiring immortality, turns his eyes away and then sees the indwelling Self.

From 'Brooding' to 'Buddhinasha', The Map of Misperception

DR. M. SIVARAMKRISHNA

Sri Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, points out how a man living in the world of the senses brings about his inevitable ruin because of misperception. In this article, Dr. Sivaramkrishnan, a regular contributor to Prabuddha Bharata, brings out that 'the madness of mistaking what we in our infatuation, attributed to an object as intrinsic, inherent to it... engenders the final, fatal fall'. The remedy is to base our lives on the Reality, the Atman. So long as one loves falsehood, one cannot get truth.

I

Brooding about sensuous objects
Makes attachment to them grow;
From attachment desire arises,
From desire anger is born.
From anger comes confusion;
From confusion memory lapses;
From broken memory understanding is lost;
From loss of understanding he is ruined.¹

Extraordinarily subtle, these verses constitute a chart tracing the graded process of spiritual decomposition. This process is luminously traced and each component is seen as a link in the eventual ruin that overtakes us. In other words, this is descriptive of life that is lived below the navel where emotions and feelings are invariably negative. Negative, since these emotions cling to only sensory objects and experiences.

II

Sensuous objects constitute the base for the process identified. These represent what is generally marked as the level of *preyas*, the delectable, as opposed to *śreyas*, the electable. *Artha* and *kāma* are the two constant poles of reference for secular life. They are so pervasive in their intrinsic attraction that

they are irresistible. 'Woman and gold', as Sri Ramakrishna reiterates function for most people as the only visible, tangible levels of consciousness. Tangible, therefore, valuable: money can be seen, sex can be experienced: the possessive and the erotic are registered physically. (Hence the aptness of Sri Ramakrishna's use of the concretions '*kāminī kāñcana*', a desired woman and coveted gold, and not abstractions, *artha* and *kāma*!)

Viewed thus, 'brooding' acquires a sharp edge. We tend to brood because of a valid reason: being anchored to fulfilment on the physical level alone, no amount of fantasizing on the imaginary level will bring satisfaction to the powerful thrust behind *artha* and *kāma*. Here is a subtle distinction between 'brooding' and 'contemplating'. In the meditative ambience we don't 'brood', we 'contemplate'. That is, brooding is also thinking but a thinking *different in kind from contemplating*.

To put it another way: *artha* and *kāma* are meaningless signifiers; signs without referents unless they find extensions in the physical form of the woman/man passionately desired and gold/money greedily hoarded. These are not, therefore, self-sufficient substances; for, their fulfilment needs physical bases. This is not *dhyāna* at all, it is

1. *The Bhagavad Gita*, tr. Barbara Stoler Miller (New York: Bantam, 1986), ch. 6, sl. 62-3, pp. 38-9; original Sanskrit text, ch. 2, sl. 62-3.

only like the continuous unblinking alertness of an animal or a bird waiting to jump on the first prey that crosses its path. In Sri Ramakrishna's suggestive metaphor, this is the 'one-pointed' concentration of a crane waiting to snatch and swallow the first fish that surfaces in the swamp!

If this 'brooding' is not differentiated in kind from *dhyāna*, we commit the first mistake in inner life which can culminate, by the sheer logic of secular life, only in inevitable disaster. This is the opening gambit in the world of *māyā*: theologically the serpent/rope bait. This bait is initially harmless. Brooding does not harm the psyche: so we are led to assume.

The contemporary situation of the media—'grazing', 'browsing' and 'hunting' media as one sociologist calls them—offers a variety of images for delectable brooding. Considering the plenitude of sexual and other kinds of violence that these media project, the 'eye is on fire'. We are exposed to so much colour, gaiety and sheer bestial diminution of the human being in many ways that we are jerked out of mere brooding into the next stage of the abyss: attachment. From random reflection we move to avid attachment.

The word attachment has '*sanga*' in the original. Whatever etymology has to suggest about '*sanga*', it signals focussing on a specific object as the target of one's attachment. Thus, desultory brooding—the mental flux—now localizes itself in and around a nucleus. Instead of a plethora of objects, one among them is chosen as the correlative for attachment. At a deeper level, brooding now becomes a source of *relishing*. '*Sanga*' could certainly sustain 'relish' rather than the innocuous meaning of 'attachment'.

Attachment implies a choice out of many contending things. Thus, it exempli-

fies *ahamkāra* and its exercise of a choice. Brooding now assumes a more distracting *avatāra*: it is in the form of '*sanga*', a source not of generalized disquiet but a personalized discontent. This is because the ego and the object(s) which it chooses for exclusive attachment and fulfilment—a person, a place or a thing representing respectively *kāma* and *artha*—have still to bridge the gap between aspiring attachment and real fulfilment.

The bridge is *kāma*: the full efflorescence of desire. If the earlier stages represent less intense level of longing, the *kāma* level exemplifies an unbearable urge for enjoyment, an intolerable infatuation, blotting out every other concern. This is an obsessive involvement which seeks fulfilment at any cost, and, what is more, brooks no delay, tolerant of no rival aspiring for the same object of enjoyment. Thus, here the ego is supreme, centering everything around one's selfish gratification. A classic instance of this insistent, overriding lust is that of the saint Vilvamangala² who swims across a channel on what he regards as a raft which turns out to be a floating corpse, catches hold of a rope (which he fondly assumes his paramour kept for a convenient, unobtrusive entry into her apartment on the first floor) which was in fact a live snake, only to be reprimanded for his incredible burning rage of lust. It made even the normal vision get blurred so that objects become transfigured.

The predictable threat to exclusive enjoyment—breeding a searing sense of insecurity—is the presence of a rival; a claim made by another to the object of love which one assumed as one's own. Since we are all driven to insanity by longing for the same thing, each aspirant, on the secular level of

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 486–7.

objects and addictions, is a potential, contending rival for the other. Out of *kāma* is thus born *krodha*: for, anger is only awareness of another aspiring for something we want exclusively for ourselves. This is not *righteous* but *riotous* anger running riot in the mind razing the whole edifice to ruins. This is a mad elephant stung by the bee of jealousy lodged inside.

The end result is *confusion, sammoha*. This is infatuation compounded by fantasy: an absence of *fusion* between what one *ought* to do and what one *does*. This is not mere infatuation but a willing suspension of *viveka*, a refusal to *see*. This is wanton, wilful amnesia: not prepared to concede what your perception intuits. These intimations are brushed aside: to stretch the example cited earlier, even if it is a dead body, what does it matter? even if it is a snake, it is immaterial. For, the end has been achieved: to see the beloved; the means hardly matter to him. In Ramakrishna's image, this is the state of the camel which continues to eat thorns even when blood oozes from the mouth uninterruptedly.

The end/means confusion is what we can identify as loss of memory. Without any futile attempt at what is meant technically by *smṛti*, lapse of memory can be taken to mean the original misperception of the *object of one's longing as inherently flawed* in place of reading infatuation as a result of the lapse of one's own memory of the self, the Atman, beyond all duality. In other words, this is the map of misperceived reality, so that *the other* is found wanting but in the preparation of the map we *assumed* the point of its existence.

As Swami Yatiswarananda puts it:

The lover is always disillusioned in the end, and this is not due to any inherent fault of his beloved. He lives in a

world of his own romance and creation during the time of his infatuation just as the madman lives in an imaginary world of his own.³

The madness of our mistaking what *we* in our infatuation *attributed* to an object as *intrinsic, inherent* to it, is the culmination of *smṛti vibhramaḥ*. This culmination engenders the final, fatal fall: *buddhināśa*, the dissolution of discriminating intelligence. The intolerably tragic situation is indeed strange and paradoxical; for, even when given a chance to retrace one's false steps, the contexts which afford these chances are not read in terms of continuing reliance on the other as the object initially of one's romantic dreams and eventually of one's disenchantment. Instead of functioning as centres of intense introspection, they induce irrepressible nostalgia resulting in negatable regress of *buddhi* reducing the mind to what Diana Ackerman called 'the compost heap of short-term memory'. As Swami Yatiswarananda puts it:

When the romance breaks, things begin to appear in their true light, and disillusionment comes, but it is wrongly attributed to the object of love and to some fault inherent in it. Naturally, every object of love that is transient or subject to birth and death, is wrongly chosen, but we should blame *ourselves* and not the object for having done so.⁴

The implicit flaw is the choice of error and the attribution of *truth* to it:

So long as one loves falsehood, one cannot get truth. Loving an unreality we cannot expect our love to prove some-

3. Swami Yatiswarananda, *Readings on Swami Brahmaṇanda's Spiritual Teachings* (Holland: Barbant, 1993), p. 92.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

thing real in the end. So many people wail about their misfortunes and all the disappointments life has brought them, but they never take the trouble to study whether their life was based on reality or not, whether they tried to erect a fine building on bad foundations, or whether they first saw to it that the foundations were right and laid in the proper way.⁵

Buddhi, in this sense, is not ordinary intelligence but an ordering principle of reality allowing nostalgia to displace reality; it

is coming to grips with both life and death. Or rather, to neutralize the misperception of what life is for most of us: 'something,' as Diana Ackerman observes, 'that happens to people while they wait for death.'⁶ Seen thus, the entire process from brooding to *buddhināśa* is one that needs not minor adjustment but a major reversal—if the inevitable ruin is to be stemmed. □

5. Ibid.

6. *A Natural History of the Senses* (New York: Vintage, 1991), p. 309.

Work and Worship

(Continued from page 765)

Still overwhelmed with joy she said: 'A labourer won a hundred thousand rupees in a lottery. The moment he heard the news he died of joy. Yes, he really and truly died. I am afraid the same thing is going to happen to me. Please bless me, friends, or else I shall certainly die.'

This expression of the brāhmani giving vent to her sincere feeling of joy and ecstatic mood upon the arrival of Sri Ramakrishna which effaced from her mind all grief on account of her daughter's demise, so moved M., that he was about to take the dust of her feet!

She expressed in various ways her extreme joy on account of the arrival of the Master and the devotees, when her sister came and said to her, 'Come down, sister! How can I manage things if you stay here? Can I do it all by myself?' Though strikingly

similar to the episode in the life of Jesus Christ, yet we must not fail to take note of the fact that even though distressed by grief, the brāhmani had given her mind wholly to the Master, anxious for his arrival, and worked all day making arrangements for his refreshments. However, when the Master had come to her presence out of his infinite grace, what was she to do except being in his presence? How earnest her expectations had been could well be gauged by her remarks that she would have thrown the preparations into the holy Ganges had he not come. And not only that, should he visit a place, she would go to that place, look at him from a distance, not utter a word even showing her great displeasure and disappointment, and return giving him that silent message of disapproval! That she could give vent to this feeling of hers only goes to prove that she had made Sri Ramakrishna her very own through work and devotion. □

The Lyrics of Sri Purandaradas: Revelations of Truth

DR. JAYALAKSHMI GOPINATH

Sri Purandaradas, a saint born in Karnataka, is memorable even today among the Vaishnavite saints of India. An illustrious example of Dāsya Bhakti, Sri Purandaradas, in his early life, had devoted himself to the study of Sanskrit and ancient scriptures. However, he fell a prey to great affluence and turned miserly. At the opportune moment a miraculous event occurred in his life which turned the mind of Sri Purandaradas to God, and, in later life, his heart overflowed with ecstasy. This lucid article by Dr. Jayalakshmi Gopinath of Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, describes the early life of Sri Purandaradas and the story of his 'transformation from an inveterate miser to a saint...suffused with the glory and grandeur of the surrender of the devotee and the loving tenderness of God'. The author also highlights the saint's repentance for his past misdeeds, the anguish of separation from the Lord, the joy in His presence, and the many words of wisdom for the common man enshrined in his many lyrics.

When thou commandest me to sing,
it seems that my heart would break with
pride and I look to thy face and tears
come to my eyes. All that is harsh and
dissonant in my life melts into one sweet
harmony and my adoration spreads
wings like a glad bird on its flight across
the seas. I know thou takest pleasure in
my singing. I know that only as a singer
I come before thy presence. I touch by the
edge of the far-spreading wing of my
song thy feet which I could never aspire
to reach.

—Gitanjali

Such was the spirit with which sang Sri Purandaradas intoxicated by his longing for God and the yearning for ultimate consummation. His transformation from an inveterate miser to a saint is an incredible story, suffused with the glory and grandeur of the surrender of the devotee and the loving tenderness of God. It is an enchanting story of love between God and his chosen devotee. A tender story of the hot pursuit of the fleeing quarry cornered by the divine Hound of Heaven. It is a revelation of the truth of the

indissoluble bond between God and man.

Srinivasa, the later Purandaradas, was the only cherished child to Varadappa Nayaka and Radhabai. He was a gift from God, a token of appreciation for the ardent worship and rigorous vows undertaken by the parents. A flourishing diamond merchant, his father was doubly rich by an opulent inheritance and a prosperous business. Srinivasa grew in the lap of luxury. Wealth and abundant comfort were at his beck and call. The fond child grew to be precocious, petulant, demanding and imperious.

Endowed with sharp brilliance, Srinivasa avidly took to the study of Sanskrit and the ancient scriptures. The doting parents were proud of their only son's attainments. They performed the *upanayanam* ceremony of their son in the strict brahminical tradition, with great pomp and with an eye to meticulous religious injunctions. Srinivasa grew to be eighteen years of age and the parents were desirous of getting him married. They looked forward to a progeny en-

dowed with astute business acumen and they dreamt dreams of a glorious future. A befitting bride from a wealthy family of repute was chosen. Tender of age, the young girl had hidden treasures of a temperament, noble, generous and humble.

Srinivasa, along with a rare proficiency, learnt also the tricks of the trade and was a great asset to his father. He became a connoisseur of diamonds. After the demise of his father, the colossal business was proudly and efficiently monitored by Srinivasa. His affluence waxed, so did his arrogance and covetousness. He became wary about every pie and they were zealously guarded. The miser's tell-tale treasure mounted and along with it the anxiety and the worry. Srinivasa's peace and calm were rudely disturbed by the agitations of his own avarice and parsimony.

Forgotten and lost were the injunctions of the scriptures and Srinivasa's greed took its own toll on his devoted wife who prayed day and night for his enlightenment. She was apprehensive of the retribution. Charity and benevolence were unknown terms in the house and the bareness of their opulence was formidable.

Divine Destiny works itself out inevitably and the auspicious time was nearing. An old brahmin went to Srinivasa and humbly requested him for financial help to perform the marriage of his daughter. Irate Srinivasa chased him away. It was audacious and an affront to his status and dignity for a poor man to beg at his door. The brahmin then went to the devout and sympathetic wife of Srinivasa and appealed to her sense of compassion and generosity. She had nothing that belonged to her. The careful husband had seen to it that everything was under his iron control, sealed and inaccessible. Touched by the old brahmin's humble appeal and his pitiable state of poverty, the

generous Lakshmidēvi removed her only possession, the diamond nose-ring, given to her by her parents and told him to sell it and utilize the money for the auspicious ceremony. Her good wishes she added in plenty to the gift. Life's ironies are inexplicable. The old man reversed his footsteps and went seeking Srinivasa to pawn the jewel. The crafty businessman's and the connoisseur's keen eyes recognized the jewel immediately. He placed it in a box and shoved it carefully into his inner pocket. Try as he did the only information he could get out of the brahmin was that a good and kind-hearted lady had given him the jewel. He ordered the brahmin to follow him and went straight to the house. His authoritative and angry tone brought his docile wife trembling to his presence. He saw that the nose-ring was missing on her person and thundered, demanding that it should be produced immediately. Cognizing the precarious situation, this great devotee rushed to the shrine and prayed intensely to Lord Shiva and Parvati to protect her from damnation as she had no other way out of the unhappy situation but to commit suicide. Ere the poisoned cup was raised to the lips, lo and behold, the diamond nose-ring fell tinkling into the cup. Overjoyed, she ran to show the fuming husband the ornament. Bewildered, stupefied, confused, Srinivasa fumbled for the box in his pocket, opened it and found to his utter amazement that the nose-ring had vanished. He looked for the brahmin, but he too had dissolved into the distant blues. Where was he? He ran like a mad man to his shop, frantically searched and enquired of every passerby whether they had seen an old brahmin. His efforts were of no avail. He then asked his wife for the details and the truth dawned that Pāṇḍuraṅga had come to his threshold seeking him and he had heartlessly driven him away. Srinivasa realized the horror and magnitude of his error.

Intuitive flashes like the lightning are

immediate and illuminating. Srinivasa saw in a flash his life of selfishness and arrogance, which now appeared repulsive and impossible to atone. The smarting anguish of his inhuman act brought the burning tears of repentance. Time was fleeting, he must seek God and pray for forgiveness. The enlightenment was sudden and instantaneous. He gathered in armfuls all his treasures and his carefully garnered wealth and gave it away to the poor and the needy. Donning the ochre robe, taking only one possession, the *tanpura* [a musical instrument], he unburdened himself of all worldly possessions to undertake the spiritual journey. A Hindu wife's place is near her husband and the chaste one followed in the footsteps of her husband.

Life now became a divine melody, joyous and soothing. Devotion flowed in tune-ful songs and an overflowing heart wept in ecstasy. Caught up till now in the odious *samsāra* of the world, he now longed for the *samsāra* of God. Stepping out of home and hearth he sang:

Oh God, give me the fortune of your *samsāra*. Krishna is my Father and Lakshmi, my Mother. Brahma is my brother and Saraswati, my sister-in-law. Vayudeva is my Guru. My true kith and kin are Haridasas and wherever Hari's name is sung is the temple. The cleansing bath is the wiping out of all attachments and Hari's Name is the nectarine elixir. Oh, Purandara Vitthala, bless me that I worship Thy holy feet. Hold my hand and guide me forever with compassion, Oh Lord.

These states of ecstasy would be sometimes overshadowed by the uneasy memories of the past. Then Purandaradas would pour out the agony of his soul in self-chastisement. In one lyric which expresses this mood he says:

Is it enough, Oh God? I have committed so many sins. Who else can absolve me of them but You, my Creator? I never said my *sandhya* prayers nor had a holy bath, even one day. I roamed about like a dog and a pig to fill my belly. Out of irrepressible jealousy I hurt everyone. Listening to the insinuating words of my wife, I alienated myself from my kith and kin, nay, even from my own mother. I illegitimately appropriated to myself what belonged to others. Not a day did I listen to the renderings of the *śrutis*, *śāstras* and *purāṇas* and hence suffered inevitable disasters and misfortunes. My God, let me forget the past. Father, protect me and forgive me, Oh, Purandara Vitthala.

These dark moods were the precursors to the brilliant dawn and once again the buoyant moods of joy and exhilaration would flood him. He would sing the glory of God in unmitigated devotion. These lyrics were the quintessence of the wisdom contained in the holy scriptures rendered in a language lucid and simple. Intoxicated with love for God he sang:

You are the father and mother who have given me this birth. You are my dear friend. You are the many relations. You are everything. You are the myriad gems in the golden casket. Oh, You the mighty and great Krishna, as long as You are there how can I even become an orphan, a *paradesi*? You impart to me *vidyā*, You teach good qualities. You are my father who is interested in my welfare. You are my master and, Oh, Krishna, as long as You are there for me, I can never become an orphan, a *paradesi*. Oh, sweet and lovely Purandara Vitthala, I who have laid my head on Your holy feet, what fear have I? I am not an orphan or a *paradesi*—You belong to me and I to You.

God tests his dear ones till the ego is crushed and only the pure essence remains. Manifold were the searing experiences of Purandaradas. Many a time God eluded him and in despair he called out to Him with an intensity that transcended all mortal barriers and knocked at the gates of heaven. As Francis Thompson says in *Hound of Heaven*,

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke,
My harness piece by piece Thou hast
 hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee:
I am defenseless utterly.

Humiliation and ignomy have been a part of the severe test that these great souls have faced. They have come out of it unscathed and pure. Their potent weapon has been the Name of the Lord. On one occasion, when Purandaradas was confronted with public disgrace, he sang soulfully:

I do not want You, nor will I submit myself to Your mocking pride. It is enough if I have the power of Your Name. Did not Your Name save Gajendra, who called out to You as Ādimūla, when he was caught by the crocodile? In the huge assembly, faced with dishonour and disgrace, did not Draupadi call out 'Krishna! Krishna!' and did You not save her? When Prahlada's father was torturing him, the Name of Narahari saved him. So, why do I need You and why suffer the humiliation of Your mockery, Ranga? It's enough if I have the power of Your Name. It is peerless, Oh, Purandara Vitthala. You are reputed for Your miracles. It is indeed enough if I have the power of Your Name.

These apostles of God knew no barriers of caste, creed, colour or faith. To them the

whole creation was bound by a spiritual kinship. Everyone was the child of God. Apartheid and practice of untouchability are sins against humanity. Singing his way to salvation, Purandaradas, observing these inhuman practices, sang in tuneful melody, fearlessly exposing man and his hypocrisy:

Is the untouchable only outside? Is he not within? One who utters a lie is an untouchable. One who hates another is an untouchable. One who disregards his mother is an untouchable.

One who commits adultery is an untouchable. One who has no compassion is an untouchable. One who thinks he knows everything is an untouchable. One who does not sing the Name of Hari is an untouchable. Is the untouchable outside, not inside, Oh, Purandara Vitthala?

Many are the simple yet profound lyrics of Purandaradas. They are memorable even today in Karnataka. They are the scriptures of the common man. They are the repository of spiritual, moral and worldly truths. Their soulful melody lifts one to the summits of the spirit. They speak plain truths and expose man's hypocrisy with a benevolent dispassion. They exhort and inspire man to tread the path of devotion and experience everlasting bliss. They are delightful lyrics that are not only full of love for God but also contain rare wisdom.

Sri Purandaradas has carved a niche for himself among the Vaishnavite saints of India. He enriched the Vaishnavite tradition of the Haridasas. He is an illustrious example of Dāśya Bhakti. He will remain ever dear and memorable to those who yearn for God and the holy consummation. □

Powers of the Mind-III

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

We are all slaves to our senses, slaves to our own minds, conscious and subconscious. The reason why a criminal is a criminal is not because he desires to be one, but because he has not his mind under control and is therefore a slave to his own conscious and subconscious mind, and to the mind of everybody else. He must follow the dominant trend of his mind; he cannot help it; he is forced onward in spite of himself, in spite of his own better promptings, his own better nature; he is forced to obey the dominant mandate of his own mind.

Deep down in our subconscious mind are stored up all the thoughts and acts of the past, not only of this life, but of all other lives we have lived. This great boundless ocean of subjective mind is full of all the thoughts and actions of the past. Each one of these is striving to be recognized, pushing outward for expression, surging, wave after wave, out upon the objective mind, the conscious mind. These thoughts, the stored-up energy, we take for natural desires, talents, etc. It is because we do not realize their true origin. We obey them blindly, unquestioningly; and slavery, the most helpless kind of slavery, is the result; and we call ourselves free. Free! All the misery of the world is caused by this slavery to the senses. Our inability to rise above the sense-life—the striving for physical pleasures, is the cause of all the horrors and miseries in the world. It is the science of psychology that teaches us to hold in check the wild gyrations of the mind, place it under the control of the will, and thus free ourselves from its tyrannous mandates. Psychology is therefore the science of sciences, without which all sciences and all other knowledge are worthless.

Deep, deep within, is the soul, the essential man, the Atman. Turn the mind inward and become united to that; and from that standpoint of stability, the gyrations of the mind can be watched and facts observed, which are to be found in all persons. Such facts, such data, are to be found by those who go deep enough, and only by such. Among that large class of self-styled mystics the world over, there is a great difference of opinion as to the mind, its nature, powers, etc. This is because such people do not go deep enough.

If you intend to study the mind, you must have systematic training; you must practice to bring the mind under your control, to attain that consciousness from which you will be able to study the mind and remain unmoved by any of its wild gyrations. Otherwise the facts observed will not be reliable; they will not apply to all people and therefore will not be truly facts or data at all.

To control the mind you must go deep down into the subconscious mind, classify and arrange in order all the different impressions, thoughts, etc. stored up there, and control them. This is the first step. By the control of the subconscious mind you get control over the conscious.

Ratha Yatra in Andhra Pradesh

SWAMI SWATMANANDA

A short report of the Ratha Yatra appeared under News and Reports in the November 1997 issue of Prabuddha Bharata.

The Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's return to India was celebrated in different parts of India. The Madras Math in collaboration with the Coimbatore Mission observed the occasion from 26 January to 15th February by arranging a procession with Swami Vivekananda's image in the lead and holding meetings at different places in Tamil Nadu visited by Swamiji a hundred years ago.

After hearing about the above celebration and despite the fact that Swami Vivekananda did not pass through Andhra Pradesh, having decided to go straight to Calcutta by the sea route, the thought of celebrating the occasion by a Ratha Yatra in Andhra Pradesh took root. The matter was discussed during the annual convention of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Bhava Prachar Parishad held at Tanuku in January 1997. Members of the various committees and Samithis showed great enthusiasm and came forward to organize a Ratha Yatra (Chariot Procession) and related celebrations. Another meeting was held at Rajahmundry on 16 March 1997 attended by Swamis Tattwabodhanandaji and Swatmanandaji (President and Vice President respectively of the Bhava Prachar Parishad), executive members of the Parishad and two members each from the thirty-three Samithis. It was decided at this meeting that (i) a steering committee be constituted for arranging the celebrations, (ii) to have the Ratha Yatra pass through the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh (since Swamiji reached Calcutta by the sea route) starting from Chittoor on the Tamil Nadu-Andhra

Pradesh border and culminating in Ichhapuram on the Andhra Pradesh-Orissa border, (iii) to freely distribute various books containing Swamiji's message, and (iv) to have each Samithi organizing the celebration at their place contribute Rs. 2,000/- as donation towards the expenses.

The Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee at Kanyakumari lent their chariot containing an impressive image of Swami Vivekananda as a *parivrajaka* (wandering monk); the chariot reached Chittoor on 25 April. For the purpose of distributing books and other items, 1,20,000 copies of *Amrita Vakkulu - Swami Vivekananda* (Words of Nectar in Telugu), 5000 copies of *My Plan of Campaign*, 2000 copies of *Chicago Addresses*, 1000 copies of *Bharata Jatiki Naa Hitavu* (My Advice to Indians in Telugu), 2000 copies of Swamiji's biography, 1000 copies of *Naa Bharata Desama Meluko* (Awake, My India in Telugu), 2000 copies of *Vivekananda for Children*, photographs of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swamiji, Aphorisms, 5000 copies of *Sun Shades* and 5000 copies of handscripts were made ready. Sixty banners depicting aphoristic messages of Swamiji, replicas of Om, 500 flags bearing the emblem of Ramakrishna Mission were also made ready. Fifteen volunteers came forward to accompany the Ratham along its journey. For the procession, Sri J. Mohana Rao (Member of the Ramakrishna Seva Samithi, Nuziveedu) gave a van and the Ramakrishna Math (Rajahmundry) came forward with an Ambassador car. Wall posters (4000) with Swamiji's aphorisms and pamphlets (5000) detailing the programme

of the Yatra were despatched to the Samithis in advance.

On 1 May 1997 the entire Police Parade Ground in the heart of Chittoor wore a festive look having been decorated tastefully beforehand. The elite of the town gathered there by 7:30 a.m. and the Swamis were received with traditional honours at 7:50 a.m. A public meeting was held at 8:15 a.m. in which Swamis Tattwabodhanandaji, Swatmanandaji, Raghaveshanandaji, Sukritanandaji, Muktirupanandaji, Veetabhayanandaji and other swamis, Sri Narasinga Rao (District Collector), Sri D.S. Prasad (District Judge) and Sri Gowtham Sanang (D.S.P.) spoke elaborately on the speeches of Swami Vivekananda. The District Collector thereafter garlanded the statue of Swamiji, performed puja and waved arati. The D.S.P., after this short and simple ceremony, flagged off the Yatra by waving an Omkara flag. The procession with pipers' music, bhajan, and devotees carrying banners, moved round the town of Chittoor. Residents from the adjoining housetops showered flowers on the Ratham as it passed by. The procession came to a halt at 11 a.m. *Now commenced the first phase of the Yatra.*

Starting from Chittoor on 1 May, the Ratham reached Pakala at 11:30 a.m. Several villagers en route offered floral tributes to Swamiji and waved arati. At Venkateswara Talkies at Pakala, an enthusiastic welcome was given to the Vivekananda Ratham in which Sri Nara Ramamurthy Naidu (Member of the Legislative Assembly), Sri B. Gopala Krishna (Minor Irrigation Minister) and Sri D.C.R. Naidu (Dy. Police Commissioner of Hyderabad) participated. A procession was taken out from the new colony to the Ramakrishna Seva Samithi. Swami Tattwabodhanandaji gave to the road from Damala Cheruvu to Nendragunta the name 'Vivekananda Road'. Swami Swatmanandaji opened a guest house in the Samithi.

The Ratham then reached Tirupati at 5:30 p.m. the same day. Sri Samudrala

Laxmayya (Executive Officer of the Dharma Prachara Parishad of Tirumalai Tirupati Devasthanam), Smt. Prof. Girvani (Vice Chancellor of Padmavathi University for Women), local devotees and prominent citizens welcomed the Ratham and took out a procession from Swami Vivekananda Mandapam to Annamacharya Kala Mandir. A Public Meeting was held with Swami Tattwabodhanandaji as President. On behalf of the citizens of Tirupati, a welcome address was presented to Swami Vivekananda by Sri Samudrala Laxmayya, Smt. Prof. Girvani, Swamis Swatmanandaji, Amritanandaji, Muktirupanandaji and Sukritanandaji. Swami Ramakrishnanandaji of Yellampalli was also present on the occasion. The participating swamis spoke on the personality, patriotism and message of Swamiji. The welcome address was presented by Dr. P.V. Reddy (Secretary of the local Samithi) and the vote of thanks was given by Kumari D. Suguna.

From Tirupati the Ratham reached Sri Kalahasti on 2 May. At the bridge over the Suvarnamukhi river at the entrance to the town, a reception was given by several dignitaries and representatives of several institutions and religious organizations, to mention a few, Swami Vidya Swarupanandaji of Suka Brahma Ashramam, Sri Bhaktavatsalam Naidu, Sri Santa J. Pawar (presiding Municipal Chairman). Temple honours were offered to the Ratham. A grand procession went around the temple in which several swamis, devotees and prominent citizens took part.

The same day at 5 p.m. the Ratham reached, via Naidupeta and Gudur, Krishna Yuga Mandiram in Nellore and was received by the Executive Members of the Samithi, devotees and prominent citizens. A procession was flagged off by Sri B. Sambasiva Rao (District Collector) from the trunk road reaching Town Hall via Narthaki centre. A public meeting was held here with Sri B. Chidambaram as President. Leaving

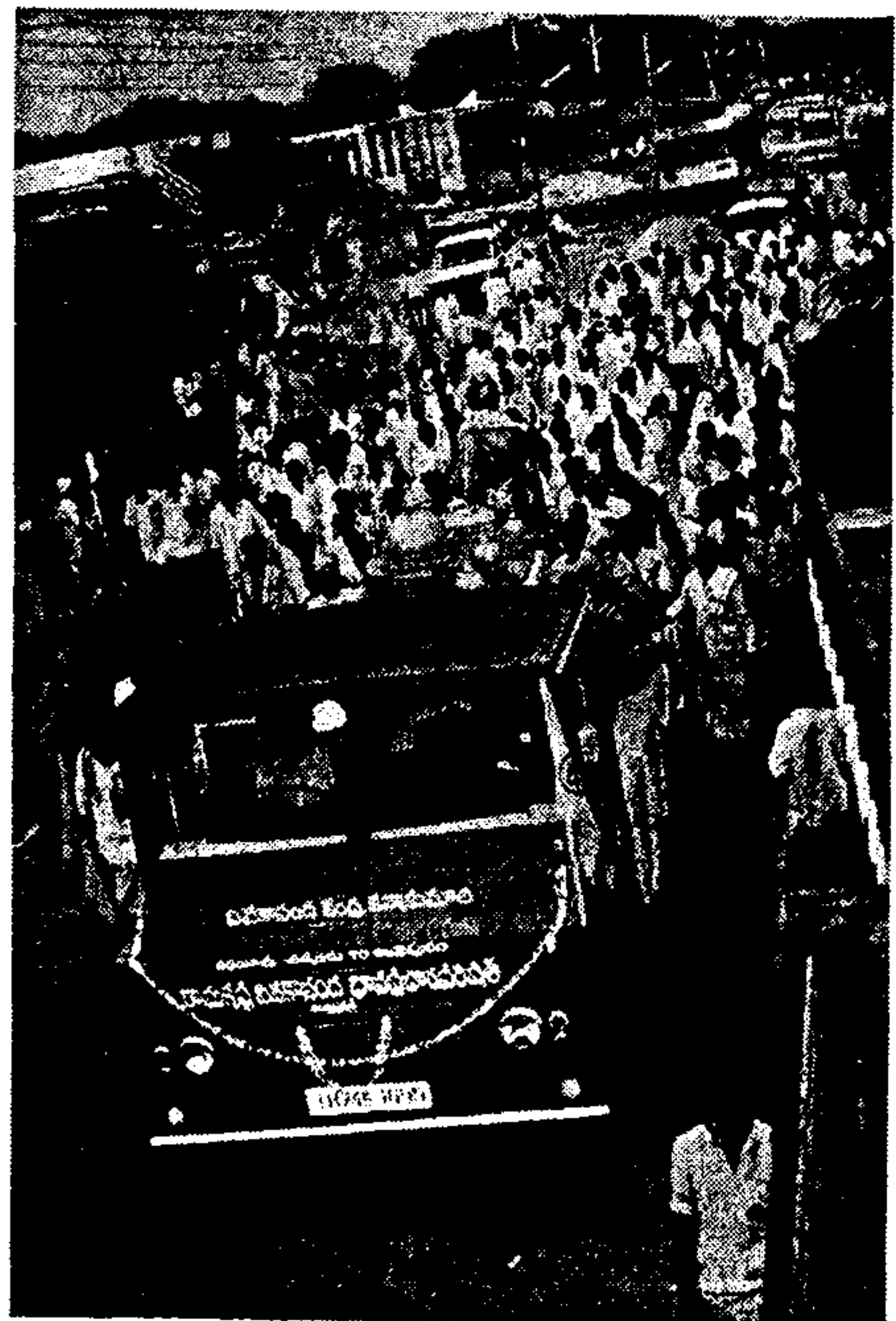
Nellore on the morning of 3 May, the Ratham reached Kavali where a reception was accorded at 10 a.m. The Ratham next went to Singarayakonda, took the diversion from National Highway-5, and via Kandukuru reached Kanigiri at 5 p.m. where the citizens received the Ratham with pipers' music and the traditional Poorna Kumbham. Smt. D.P.H. Sugunavati Amma (Sarpanch of Kanigiri) garlanded the statue of Swamiji and waved arati. A procession was taken out round the streets of Kanigiri with Sri M. Kasireddy (M.L.A.), Sri D.S.V. Subbareddy and thousands of devotees. Sri S.V. Siviah Sastri presided over a public meeting held at 8 p.m. Sri D. Ch. Gurubrahmam, Sri S.V. Krishnareddy, Sri B. Rama Subba Reddy and Sri D.C.M. Venkataswami Reddy spoke. The meeting commenced with Vedic chanting and concluded with a vote of thanks from Sri K.V. Satyanarayana (Secretary of the Seva Samithi). The Ratham next went to Podili where too the citizens arranged a procession and a public meeting. At Medarametla, a procession was arranged.

The Ratham thereafter reached Darsi at 5 p.m. on 4 May. Sri K.P.S. Sastry (President of the Seva Samithi), devotees and prominent citizens accorded a grand reception. Here too there was a procession and a public meeting. Swamis Swatmanandaji and Vinischalanandaji spoke, Sri V. Murali (Munsif-Magistrate) acted as Chief Guest, and Sri T. Lakshminarayana was the principal speaker in the meeting which was well attended by a large number of devotees and prominent citizens including the local M.R.O. The Ratham next reached Vinukonda at 10 a.m. on 5 May where a procession was taken out and a public meeting was held.

The next stop was at Rentachin-

tala in the evening. People from the neighbouring villages and local citizens accorded a welcome to the Ratham and offered floral garlands to the statue of Swamiji. A procession and a public meeting followed as elsewhere. Sri K. Ramanarasayya (2nd Addl. Munsif-Magistrate) presided and Sri G. Subbarao, M.R.O., local Sarpanch and the Chairman of the Mandali Praja Parishad and others spoke. Girls and boys of the local school presented a cultural show.

Leaving Rentachintala on 6 May, the Ratham reached Guntur on National Highway-5 the same day. Sri P. Harnath Baba, Sri D. Mohana Rao and several members of the Ramakrishna Committee and a large number of devotees accorded a grand reception. A procession was formed and routed through the important streets of the town reaching Vivekananda Vignana Samithi. A meeting was held in the local Vignana Mandir. Sri G.S. Rao (District Collector) was



Procession at Rentachintala

the Chief Guest. Acharya N.C. Sharma (Principal of the local B.Ed. College), Sri A. Anjaneyulu (President of the Indian Chamber of Commerce), Sri Tulasi Ramachandra Rao (M.D. Coastal Packaging and Senior Lawyer) and Sri M. Radhakrishna Murty spoke. This was followed by music and dance performance by the artistes of Radha Madhava College of Dance and Music.

The Ratham reached Vijayawada on 7 May. At Kanaka Durga Ghat a reception was accorded to the Ratham by prominent citizens and devotees of Sri Ramakrishna Seva Mandali. At 5:30 p.m. the Ratham was taken in procession from the local T. Raghavayya Park which had a statue of Swamiji. Floral tributes were offered to Swamiji's statue by the devotees and artistes of rural music who had gathered in large numbers. A procession was taken out along the prominent streets which took an hour. A public meeting was held in the local Thummalapalli Kshetrappa Kala Kshetram. Swamis Swatmanandaji, Paramarthanandaji and Vinischalanandaji spoke. Several devotional songs were sung by Smt. S. Kalyani and Ch. Krishna Bhavan. Sishyas of Natyacharya Sri V. Venkatarama Sarma gave a dance-drama performance on Swamiji. At the meeting the welcome address was read by Sri K. Gowri Shankar and the vote of thanks was presented by Sri Y. Ramakrishna.

The Ratham left Vijayawada and reached Nuziveedu on 8 May where too there was a procession and a public meeting. The Ratham reached Eluru on 9 May where the citizens and devotees accorded a reception and arranged a public meeting.

Leaving Eluru at 8:25 a.m. on 10 May, the Ratham reached Tadepalligudem at 9:15 a.m. the same day. Prominent citizens received the Ratham with pipers' music and the procession proceeded from Sri Ram Hotel to Gita Mandir. The Ratham took a diversion from the National Highway-5.

Later, hearing over the radio the news

at 10:30 a.m., villagers of Pippara waited for the Ratham and had darshan. At Kesavaram, the villagers welcomed the Ratham. In Unudurru, the villagers, including the ladies, came forward and waved arati before the statue of Swamiji. At 12 noon, the Ratham was received at Yendagandi with pipers' music and display of fireworks organized by Sri Ramakrishna Seva Samithi with whom Sri Satya Seva Samithi cooperated. A public meeting was held and a procession was taken out. This came to an end with a visit to the Ramakrishna temple. The same day at 4:15 p.m., the Ratham was welcomed at Gargaparru by the villagers and ladies; this was organized by the local Samithi.

On reaching Bhimavaram at 5:15 p.m. on 10 May, Sri Granthi Venkateswara Rao (Municipal Chairman) garlanded the statue of Swamiji. Several Muslims, Christians and Jains, without distinction of race, religion, caste or any other difference, garlanded Swamiji's statue and participated enthusiastically in the reception given to the Ratham. A procession was taken out through the town reaching the D.N.R. College where a public meeting was held.

On 11 May prominent villagers of Tundurru and Mallavaram welcomed the Ratham. At Narasapuram the local Seva Samithi welcomed the Ratham and here too there was a procession and a public meeting. The Ratham proceeded to Tanuku via Maruteru where, along with the villagers of Poduru, a grand reception was given to the Ratham.

By 5 p.m. on 11 May the Ratham reached the Women's College of Tanuku. An enthusiastic and grand traditional reception was offered to the Ratham with music by pipers. Prominent citizens, industrialists, members of the Rotary Club and of the Lions Club, Chairman of Nannayya Institution, and local M.L.A. participated in the reception. Later, a procession was taken out through the main streets. Sri Mullapudi



Public Meeting at Eluru



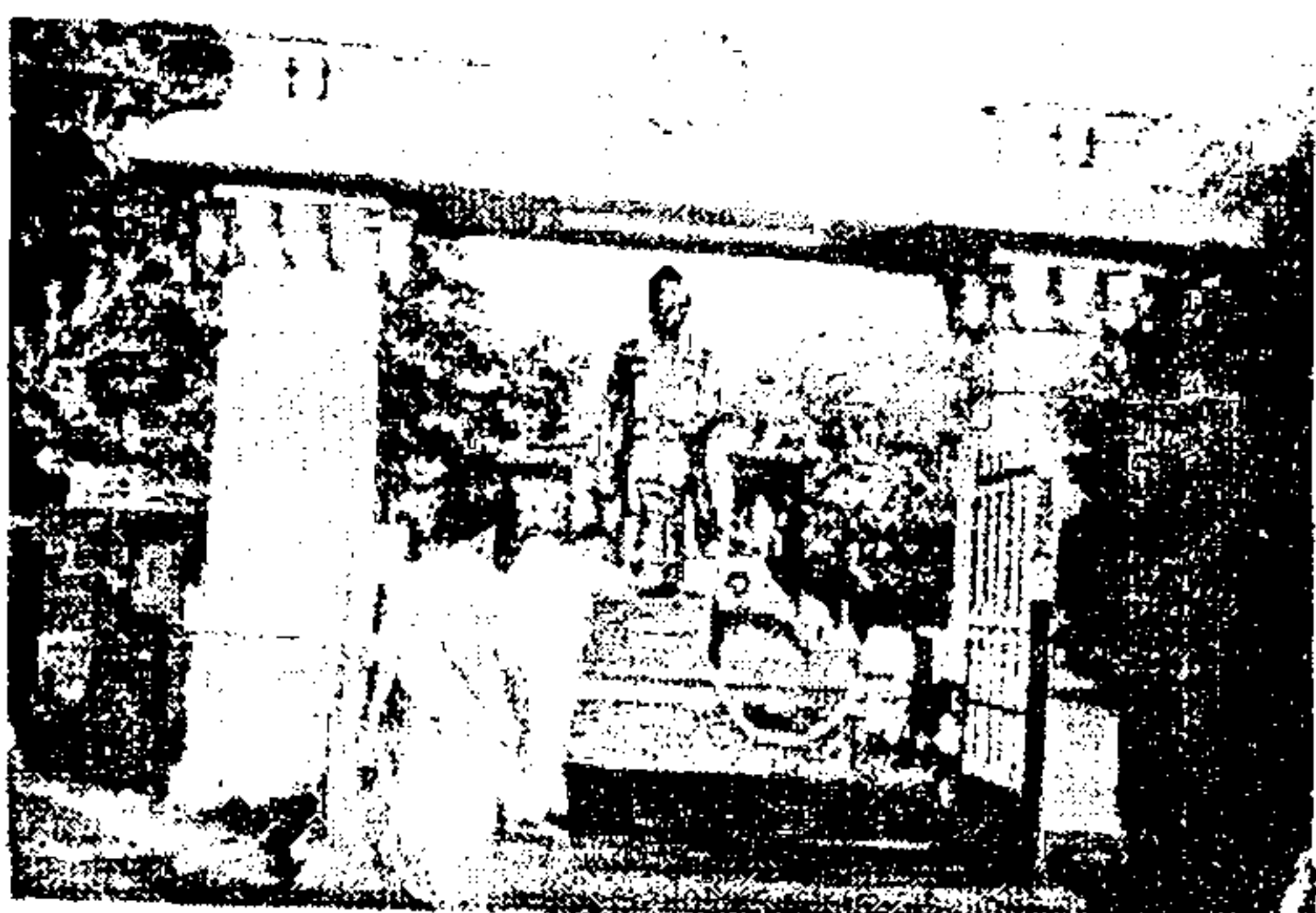
*Procession in front of the Mosque
at Bhimavaram*



Procession in front of the Church at Prathipadu



*Ratham in front of the Ramakrishna Temple
at Nuziveedu*



*Ratham in front of the Ramakrishna Math
at Rajahmundry*



Ballet on Swamiji at Vijayawada

Venkata Krishna Rao (M.L.A.) participated in the celebrations. Dr. Tatini Ramabrahmam (Secretary of the local Ramakrishna Seva Samithi) conducted the proceedings. A public meeting was held under the Chairmanship of Sri Mallina Ramachandra Rao (Vice President of the Samithi). Sri K.R.K. Prabhakara Rao (Convener of West Godavari District) had accompanied the Ratham from Eluru to Tanuku and helped in making all arrangements.

The Ratham started on 12 May from Tanuku and reached, via Ravulapalem, Amalapuram. Dr. Raghavendra Rao and his wife, prominent citizens and other residents received the Ratham with traditional welcome. After proceeding through important streets, the Ratham reached the venue of the meeting. Smt. Sita Devi (President of the local Ramakrishna Samithi) gave the welcome address. Sri Metla Satyanarayana (Minister for Co-operation) spoke at the meeting and advised everyone to strive for realizing the ideals placed before us by Swamiji. Smt. Chaya Devi (Municipal Chairperson) also spoke. The audience consisted of several prominent citizens and devotees. The vote of thanks was presented by Smt. Sita Devi.

The Ratham left Amalapuram on 13 May and proceeded via Ravulapalem, Vemagiri and Dowleswaram, reaching Rajahmundry. At Vemagiri, Sri B. Sreedhar (R.D.O., Rajahmundry) accorded a welcome by garlanding the statue of Swamiji. At Dowleswaram, barrage engineers, political leaders and local elite participated in a procession. At Rajahmundry, a grand procession consisting of hundreds of students, leading citizens and devotees was taken out from Government Girls' High School with pipers playing music, devotees singing bhajan, as the procession passed through promi-

nent streets, reaching Subrahmanya Maidanam at 7 p.m. In the public meeting that followed, Sri S.B.P. Satyanarayana Rao presided and Sri B. Ramabrahmam was the Chief Guest. Swami Swatmanandaji Maharaj and Smt. A. Vivekananda Devi spoke. After the meeting, the students of the local S.K.R. College for Women enacted the opening session of the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago giving the message of unity of all religions in Telugu. *The second phase of the Ratha Yatra started on 22 May.*

The Ratham started from Rajahmundry on 22 May reaching Anaparthi at 10 a.m. Local people welcomed the Ratham and important citizens garlanded Swamiji's statue. A procession was also taken out. The Ratham next reached Ramachandra Puram at 11 a.m. via small villages where the villagers offered their respects to Swamiji. At Ramachandra Puram the Ratham was welcomed by the people of the locality. This was



Procession at Vetlapalem

followed by a procession.

The Ratham reached **Kakinada** at 5:15 p.m. and was received near Annamma Ghati. A procession traversed the streets of the town covering a distance of 4 k.m. At the premises of the Ramakrishna Seva Samithi a public meeting was held attended by about 400.

On **23 May**, the Ratham reached **Vetlapalem** at about 10 a.m. Here too the villagers welcomed the Ratham and there was a procession with band, fireworks and bhajan. At 4 p.m. 350 people attended a public meeting. The Ratham left for **Prathipadu** on **24 May**. A procession at 5 p.m. was followed by a public meeting. The Ratham left for **Visakhapatnam** on the morning of **25 May**. The Ratham halted at Kali temple in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant at about 12 noon and was taken in a procession through the Steel Plant. The Ratham reached **Visakhapatnam** at about 5 p.m. From Bullaiah College a procession, flagged off by the Mayor of Visakhapatnam, proceeded to the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama. Many devotees participated in the procession. **Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj**, Vice President of the Ramakrishna Order, received the Ratham at the Ashrama and garlanded Swamiji in the statue. **Swami Vandananandaji Maharaj**, a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Order, too garlanded Swamiji's statue. On this occasion a newly built library was inaugurated. A public meeting attended by about 800 people was addressed by Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj. The Ratham remained at Visakhapatnam on 26 May and left for **Srikakulam** on **27 May**. On the way, the devotees of **Bhogapuram** paid their homage. At about 11 a.m. the Ratham reached **Pidi Bhimavaram** where a small meeting was held. Towards evening the Ratham reached **Srikakulam**. Here too there was a procession and a public meeting. Jaycees conducted the function. The local M.L.A. and other important citizens of the locality addressed a gathering of about 600.

On **28 May** the Ratham started for **Amudalavalasa**. At 9:30 a.m. there was a procession followed by a public meeting. At about 12 noon, the Ratham reached **Kotabommali (Kothapeta)**. As in other places there was a procession and a public meeting. At 5 p.m. the Ratham reached **Tekkali**. There was a grand procession and a public meeting was held at Government High School attended by about 400. The speakers spoke on the message of Swami Vivekananda.

On **29 May**, the Ratham taking a diversion from National Highway touched several villages: T. Palli, Viswanathapuram, Brindavanam, Naupada R.S., Naupada, Sitanagaram, S. Peta, C. Marripadu, Marripadu, D. Nattada, Bhavanapadu, Pollada, Silada, D. Tekkali, and V.B. Peta. It then reached **Palasa** on the National Highway at 1 p.m. At 4:30 p.m. there was a public meeting. Passing via **Haripuram**, **Lakkavaram** and **Palasapuram**, the Ratham reached **Sompeta** at about 6 p.m. The Ratham was welcomed by the citizens of Sompeta and there was a procession followed by a public meeting in which about 500 attended.

On **30 May** the Ratham reached **Ichhapuram** at 10:30 a.m. via Madhurapuram and Sriramapuram. Members of the local Rotary Club welcomed the Ratham and took out a procession. A public meeting was also held. After that the Ratham proceeded to the Andhra Pradesh-Orissa border and returned via Radhapur and Kaviti to Jagati. A huge procession was taken out through the streets of Jagati and a public meeting was held. This concluded the Yatra and the Ratham was given a fitting send off. In all the above meetings Swami Swatmanandaji, Dr. P. Shyama Sundara Murty (Joint Convener) and Sri B. Rama Murty (District Convener) addressed the audience. The Ratha Yatra proved to be an effective means for spreading the message of Swami Vivekananda in the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh. □

Jayrambati Visited

CHINMOYEE PRASANNA GHOSH*

The Serene Solitude

Standing Still...

The Holy Tank, the thatched cone-shaped

Cottages cleaned;

The dust-particles that bear the rare footsteps,

No whit less the wind—the Holy Breath—

Ennobling mind.

Every inch here proclaims Her Splendour.

Every bud that breaks, fragrant with Her Grace.

Crowds of people like the ebb and flow of tide

Come and go—

We wake and wail.

But the day gone by

Sweetness like Mother's love

At Jayrambati doth lie. □

The author, an ex-student (1979–1982) of Ramakrishna Mission Residential College at Narendrapur, presently teaches English in a Secondary School in West Bengal. He has made contributions to this journal in earlier years.

A Journey to Mount Athos

PROF. P. KUMAR MEHTA

This is a beautiful article describing the author's visit to two monasteries in Mount Athos. Noteworthy is the rigorous routine of the monasteries and the warmth and cordiality extended by the monks.

In northeastern Greece, Athos is a narrow peninsula that stretches into the Aegean sea. Approximately 60 k.m. long and 8 to 12 k.m. wide, the land is mostly rocky with a pyramid-shaped, 2000-metre-high mountain at the southern tip. This rugged and isolated area is a natural habitat for Christian monks wishing to practise the rigours of an ascetic life. According to a legend cited by the archaeologist Sotiris Kadas¹, Mary (mother of Christ), accompanied by St. John the Evangelist, was on her way to Cyprus when her ship was forced by a violent storm to land at Athos. Impressed by the rustic beauty of the land, she wanted to stay there. She heard a voice saying, 'Let this place be your garden, a haven for those who seek to be saved.' Thus, the Holy Mountain of Athos was consecrated as the garden of the Mother of God.

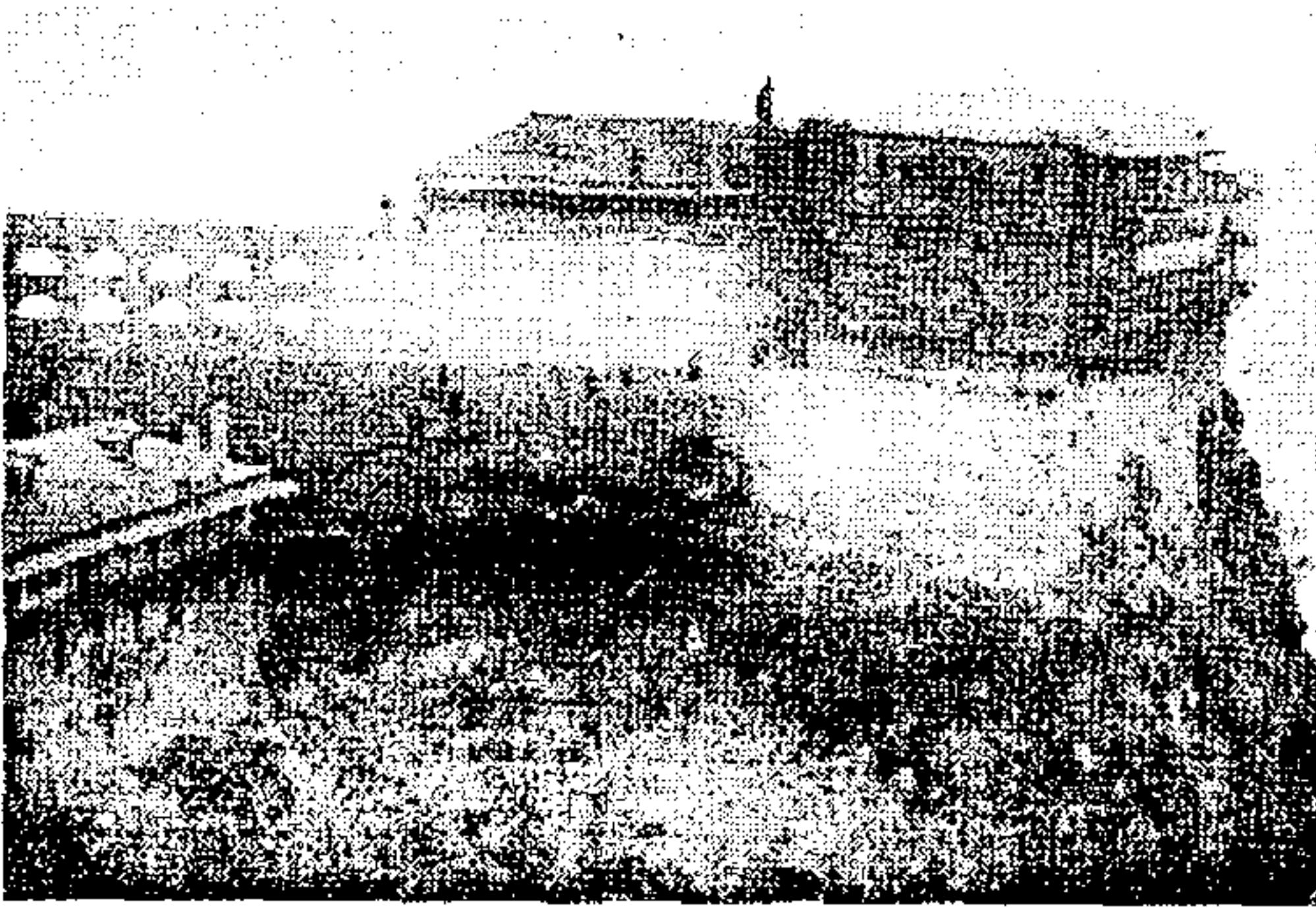
The exact date of the first monastic settlement on Athos is unknown. It is believed that Christian monasticism originated at the beginning of the fourth century AD as a reaction to the prevailing social corruption and persecution of the Christians by the state. With the growth of the Byzantine Empire, the Holy Mountain attracted men from all parts of Eastern Europe. By the end of the eleventh century, there were some 180 monasteries in Athos. Today, after many fires, earthquakes and invasions, only twenty of them are inhabited by approximately 1500

monks.

Most monasteries follow the Byzantine system of time according to which time is reckoned from sunset. A day is divided into three parts of eight hours each—one dedicated to prayer, one to work, and one to rest. Formerly, the monks in some monasteries enjoyed freedom in the choice of work and food, although shelter and prayer remained communal. Today, all monasteries have adopted a communal way of life, i.e., everything is communal including shelter, food, prayer and work. In November 1995 I availed myself of the opportunity to spend five days at two monasteries of the Holy Mountain, Simonopetra and Iveron. The visit left some unforgettable impressions which are briefly described in this article.

The seven-storeyed building of the monastery of Simonopetra represents indisputably the most daring work of construction engineering on the Holy Mountain. Conspicuously perched on a cliff which rises straight from the sea to a height of about 900 metres, it was originally built during the fourteenth century by Saint Simon. The monastery complex consists of several chapels, residential and dining facilities, terraced fields for growing vegetables, and a Roman aqueduct for the supply of fresh water. The main chapel (*katholikon*, Greek for *catholicon*) of this monastery, a masterpiece of monastic architecture, is dedicated to Christ's birth. At present about sixty monks reside there permanently. However, Simonopetra seems to attract a large number of temporary residents due to its unique location,

1. Sotiris Kadas, *Mount Athos—An Illustrated Guide to the Monasteries and Their History* (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon S.A., 1991).



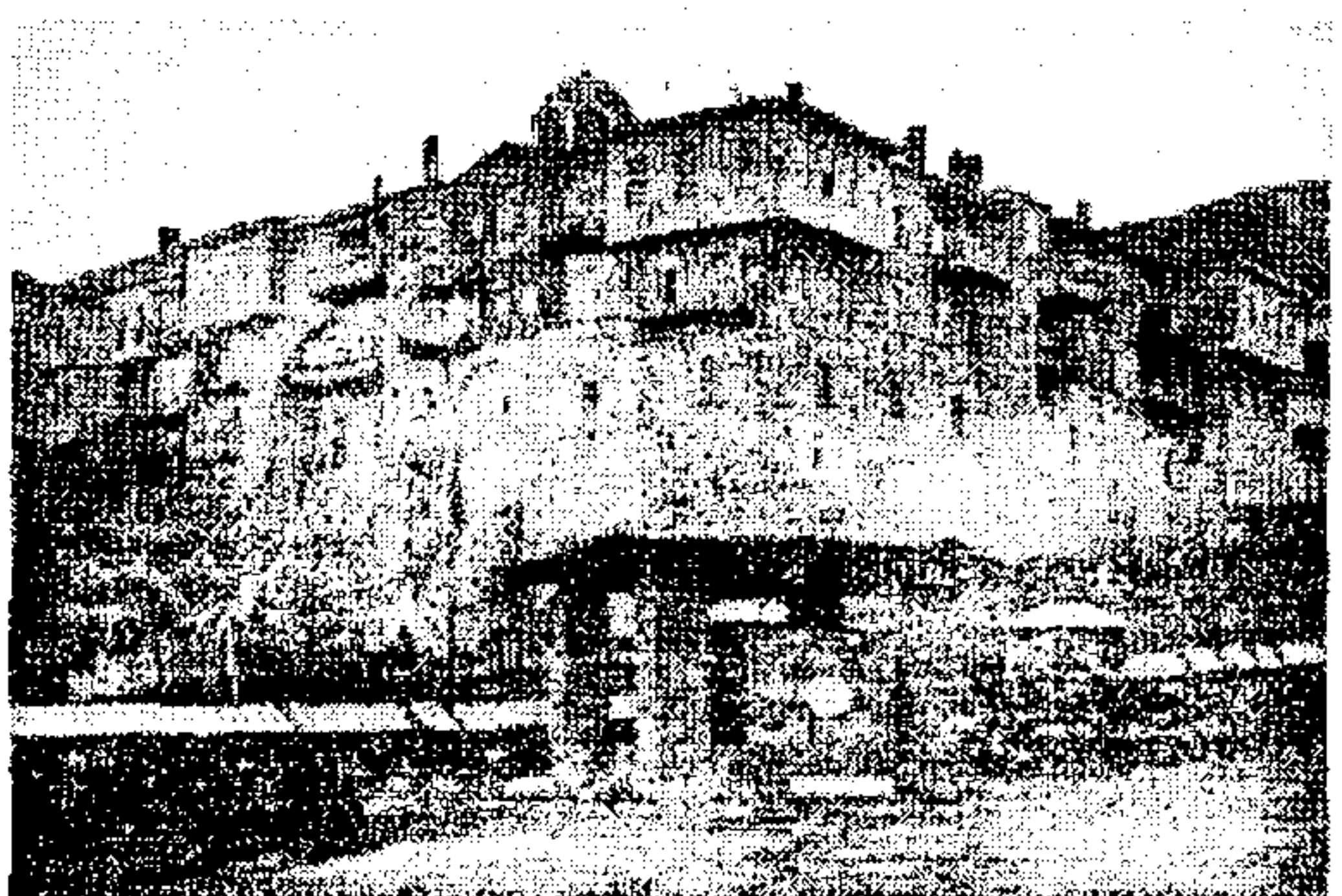
*Simonopetra Monastery perched on a seaside cliff
(Note the aqueduct on the left)*



*Father Makarios of Simonopetra monastery with the
author (right) and a colleague from the Aristotle
University at Thessaloniki, Greece*



*Eastern Orthodox Church monks on a pilgrimage to
Mt. Athos (in the background)*



Iveron Monastery, Mt. Athos



Father Joseph with the cook, Iveron Monastery

architectural elegance, and monastic reputation.

From the port village of Daphne, the monastery of Simonopetra was reached in one hour by a winding road manageable by jeep. Upon arrival at about 2:00 p.m., my companion and I, together with twenty other visitors, were cordially received by a monk. He offered us the traditional welcome of the Mt. Athos monasteries by serving *ouzo* (anise liquor) and *lokum* (a rose-flavoured candy), and then guided us to the guest rooms where we deposited our luggage. Soon, we found our way to the seventh-floor balcony overhanging the sea. Standing on the balcony and looking down at the sea one kilometre below was indeed an awe-inspiring experience.

At the sound of the wooden gong at 3:00 p.m., everyone hurried to the main chapel for evening worship. The two-hour service involved chanting, prayers and hymns interrupted by readings from various scriptures. The abbot, dressed in embroidered robes, led the ceremonies with gestures relating to the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Immediately after the worship everyone assembled in the large dining room for the evening meal. The monks and the guests occupied separate tables. A simple meal consisting of homemade bread, garbanzo bean soup, pickled olives, and a fresh apple had already been served before we took our seats at the dining table. In about ten minutes after the start of eating, a bell rang and everybody stopped at once. I had to leave my half-finished dinner in order to participate in the next activity, namely, the thanksgiving ceremony at the main chapel. My companion explained to me later that the frugal dinner menu and the partaking of food quickly without indulgence and idle talk were part of the monastic discipline. After the thanksgiving service, the visitors stayed on to see some of the valuable treasures of the monastery on display which in-

clude a fragment of the True Cross, relics of various saints, priceless icons, and religious jewelry items.

Piercing the stillness of night, the sound of the gong reverberated throughout the countryside. I looked at my watch. It was 1:00 a.m. Because the toilet and bathing facilities are communal, sufficient time must be given to the residents before the start of the four-hour-long morning service at 2:00. The service, consisting of chants, hymns, prayers and readings from scriptures, was different from the evening service, especially the rituals were much more elaborate. The monks, dressed in their robes, occupied individual wooden chairs in the main *katholikon*; the visitors occupied similar chairs in the rooms adjoining the *katholikon*. The smell of air filled with the fragrance of burning incense, the sight of candle-lit icons and murals of Christ, Christ's mother, angels and saints, and the sounds of hymns



Photograph of a beautiful icon of Jesus Christ with Mother Mary, Iveron Monastery

and earnest prayers had an uplifting effect not only on the monks, but also on others present. Occasionally, someone broke into a solitary chant, *kyrie eleison* ('Lord, have mercy on me', or 'Lord, bestow on me Your grace'). The chant was picked up and repeated randomly by other individuals sitting in different sections of the *katholikon*. Sometimes, the rendering of this chant was soul-touching when it sounded like the cry from a wounded heart.

Lunch at 8:00 a.m. consisted of tomato salad, homemade bread, and cauliflower-potato curry. At 8:30, for about an hour, I was able to meet with one of the monks, Father Macarius, who spoke English. He graciously gave a brief account of the history of the Eastern Orthodox Church in general and the Greek Orthodox Church in particular. When asked about the philosophy, he quoted the following passage from a book:

The Orthodox Church has never been satisfied with the logical proof of God's existence. Instead, it is preoccupied with the *discovery of God within the human heart*. The heart is the center where God meets a human being. The glorification of God through love is the criterion which must always be the measure of all activity in the Church.

I said, 'Father, but this sounds very much like the Vedanta philosophy of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.' He smiled and told me that during his college years in France in the early 1960's, he came across Vedanta philosophy and was much impressed by it. In his search for something similar to Vedanta within the Christian tradition, he found the Greek Orthodox Church.

Iveron, the second largest monastery in Mount Athos, is a one-hour walk from Karyes, the administrative seat of the monastic state. The trail passes through a charming wooded area with small streams and a waterfall on the way. Founded by a Georgian monk in AD 975, the huge complex of this walled monastery contains a beauti-

ful *katholikon* dedicated to the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, sixteen small chapels, residential quarters for 400 monks, a defence tower, a small harbour, and many acres of farm land. The Chapel of Portaitisse houses the famous, holy, miracle-working icon. It is reported that in the mid-sixteenth century the ailing daughter of Czar Alexious of Russia was cured with the help of a copy of this icon. Out of gratitude to the monks of Iveron, the Czar gave them the wealthy monastery of St. Nicholas in the centre of Moscow. The treasury of Iveron, comprising one of the richest and most valuable collections on Mt. Athos, includes numerous gold-embroidered objects, a rare icon collection, relics of 150 saints, and 2000 sacred manuscripts with fifteen liturgical scrolls and 100 parchment texts in the Georgian language. Today, about 75 monks live in the monastery and its associated dwellings. The communal worship and monastic routine at Iveron appeared to be quite similar to that of Simonopetra. However, encounters with two English-speaking monks left some deep impressions on me. One of them, a young Australian, was the caretaker of the main chapel. Not only did he give me a personal tour of the icons and murals in several chapels of the monastery, but also showed me some of the rare icons in storage which, normally, are not available for general viewing. Noticing my great interest in one of the icons, he granted me permission to photograph it. His gentleness and friendliness touched my heart.

The other monk, Father Jacob, was the keeper of the only entrance to the monastery complex. In addition to locking up the main door every evening and unlocking it the next morning, he also received the visitors to the monastery. During the religious services, those who do not belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church are not permitted inside the central worship room of the main chapel. Father Jacob left his seat in the central wor-

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Expanding the Horizons of Teacher Preparation

SWAMI TANMAYANANDA

'Education is the panacea for all evils,' said Swami Vivekananda. Upon teachers rests this solemn task of imparting education to children, to school- and college-going students, to university students, to those engaged in research. Education is not merely learning—sharing information, book knowledge—, but something more. In the language of Swami Vivekananda it is the nervous attunement to ideas, not a mere memorizing or collection of facts. The teacher must therefore himself be attuned to ideas which conduce to the well-being both of the individual and of the society. The society must be led along the national lines of thinking following which it has so far progressed. There is no way a nation shall divorce itself from its settled way of growth and thinking and take to foreign modes of expression. It is necessary therefore that the teacher is adequately rooted in the national ideals. Every nation must therefore address itself seriously to the very important requirement of training teachers in the method of imparting education, a task Swami Vivekananda never failed to highlight. Not merely through precept but also through example, a teacher is called upon to demonstrate what he wishes to convey to his student—in a sense every member of the society he lives in.

In this lucid article, Swami Tanmayananda, Secretary of Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya at Coimbatore, describes how in the Vidyalaya, which is an educational complex, the task of teacher preparation is being performed.

Teacher preparation centres have a crucial role to play in the rebuilding of any nation. In this process, these centres should 'make' rather than 'manufacture' teachers. Teachers imbued with 'values' in addition to their academic requisites alone can effect a real transformation in the society. They alone can have an impact on the lives of their students. Therefore, teacher preparation centres should shift their emphasis, preparing teachers who are not merely 'store houses of information' but veritable 'temples of knowledge' so that they can impart to their students secular knowledge and skills as well as inculcate values and improve the motor responses of children. The teacher preparation centres of Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore, strive for developing the overall personality of the student-teachers, thereby contribut-

ing to the nation building activities.

Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya was founded by Sri T.S. Avinashilingam in 1930. It stands for the educational ideals preached and practised by Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. It cherishes for its inmates a life of purity and discipline, of simplicity and service, and underlines the ideas that 'work is worship' and 'labour is love'. The Vidyalaya believes that the greatness of a man is not to be judged by the quantum or nature of work he does, but by the attitude, the outlook and devotion with which he does it. The youth of the nation should be trained to develop their spiritual strength, to manifest their intellectual independence, and to perfect their moral character. They must also learn to lead a disciplined life and develop the capacity to work in unison with others. The student-life in the

Vidyalaya is organized with these ideals in view.

The College of Education

The College of Education, which is a unit of the Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya at Coimbatore, is one of the premier institutions in India. Established in 1950, the College offers all courses in education ranging from B.Ed. to Ph.D. The College has many distinctive features which make it unique. The College was the first of its kind in India to receive the status of autonomy. Under the autonomous status, various innovative programmes are introduced every year, which include examination reforms, curriculum revisions, and commencement of new courses.

The *Extension Services Department* of this College which was started in the 1960s purports to work closely with the schools, thereby contributing to the betterment of the educational climate in the community. The department organizes need-based in-service courses for the teachers to update their knowledge in various subject areas. Orientation courses on 'value development' are also organized periodically. The need for closer interaction between teacher preparation centres and schools, emphasized in recent statements on educational policy, is being practised in the Vidyalaya for more than three decades.

The College emphasizes the overall personality development of the students and, therefore, offers special diploma courses in which are taught the 'Cultural Heritage of India' in addition to the regular teacher preparation subjects. The multi-media and micro-computer units of the College provide the necessary insight to the use of the most advanced technological aids in education.

Yet another uniqueness of the College is in the field of special education. A *Research and Development Centre for the Disabled* attached to the College of Education provides comprehensive services to the visually dis-

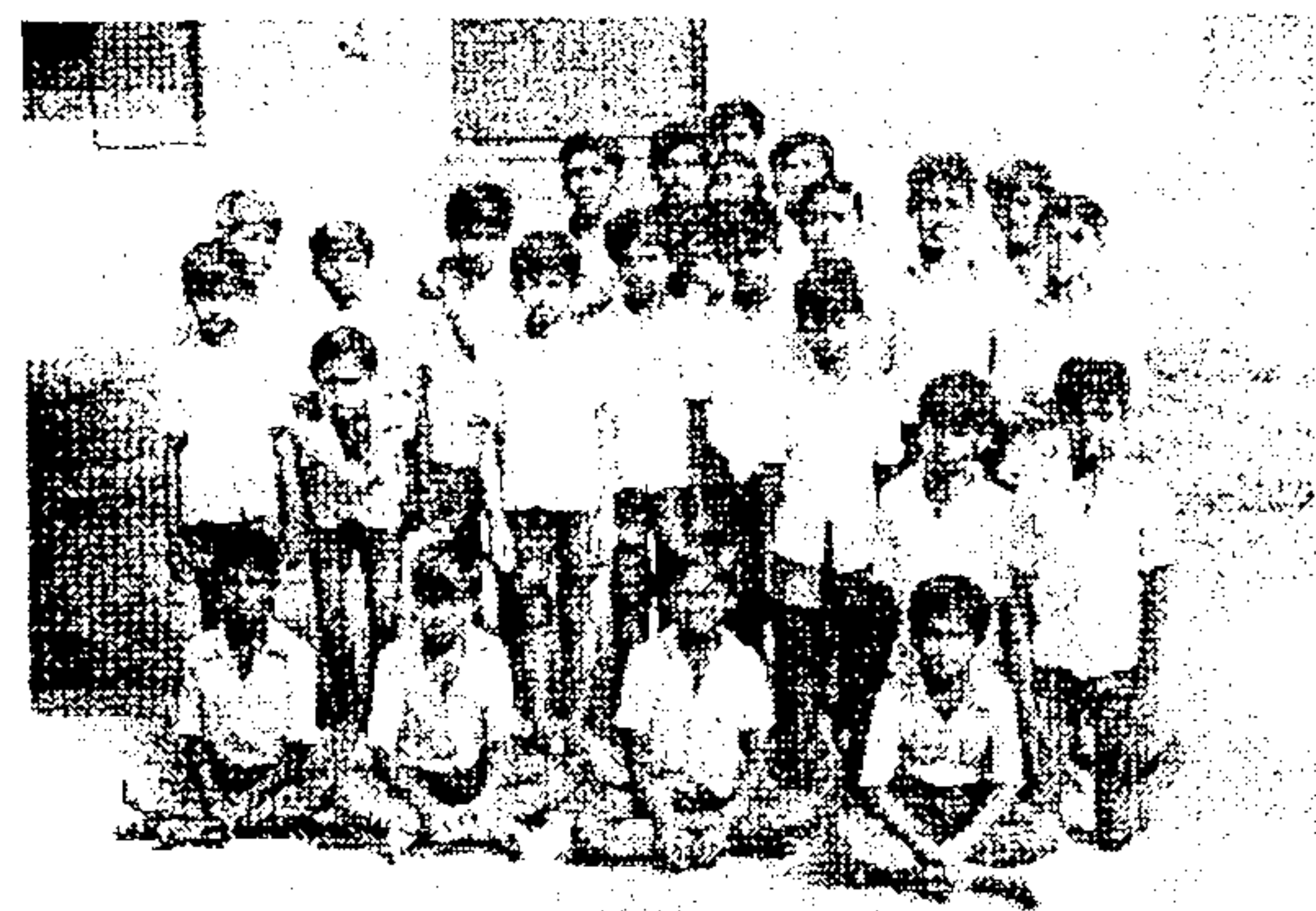
abled persons in the area of education and community-based rehabilitation. The Centre practises the concept of 'Integrated Education' which aims at *providing education to visually disabled children along with normal children in general schools*. The Centre has a *computerized Braille production unit* which has the facility to prepare Braille books in all languages spoken in India. The *Economy-Oriented Rehabilitation Programme* has enabled more than 150 adult blind persons to obtain suitable employment. The *Notebook Making Unit*, which has for majority of its employees visually disabled persons, produces every kind of notebook for use by students studying in general schools. This unit is self-contained in nature. The Government of Tamil Nadu honoured the Vidyalaya in 1992 recognizing its employing the maximum number of disabled persons in the State. The services of the Resource and Development Centre percolate down to the downtrodden sections of the society. In short, the College of Education provides a whole range of services starting from rendering services to the underprivileged up to imparting training in the most appropriate and advanced technology in education.

The Gandhi Teacher Training Institute

The Gandhi Teacher Training Institute which prepares teachers for the primary levels of education has a great legacy. Started in 1942 during the pre-Independence period, it was recognized as a State Level Centre for providing basic education. The Training Centre continues its tradition and focusses mainly on the man-making education of Swami Vivekananda.

The Maruthi College of Physical Education

The third teacher preparation centre in the Vidyalaya, the Maruthi College of Physical Education, is an institute of excellence in this field. This College offers courses ranging from B.P.Ed. to Ph.D. Besides organizing regular District Level and State Level sports and games, the College conducts a colourful play festival every year in which participate



*A section of the students of the
Vidyalaya High School (Integrated Education)*

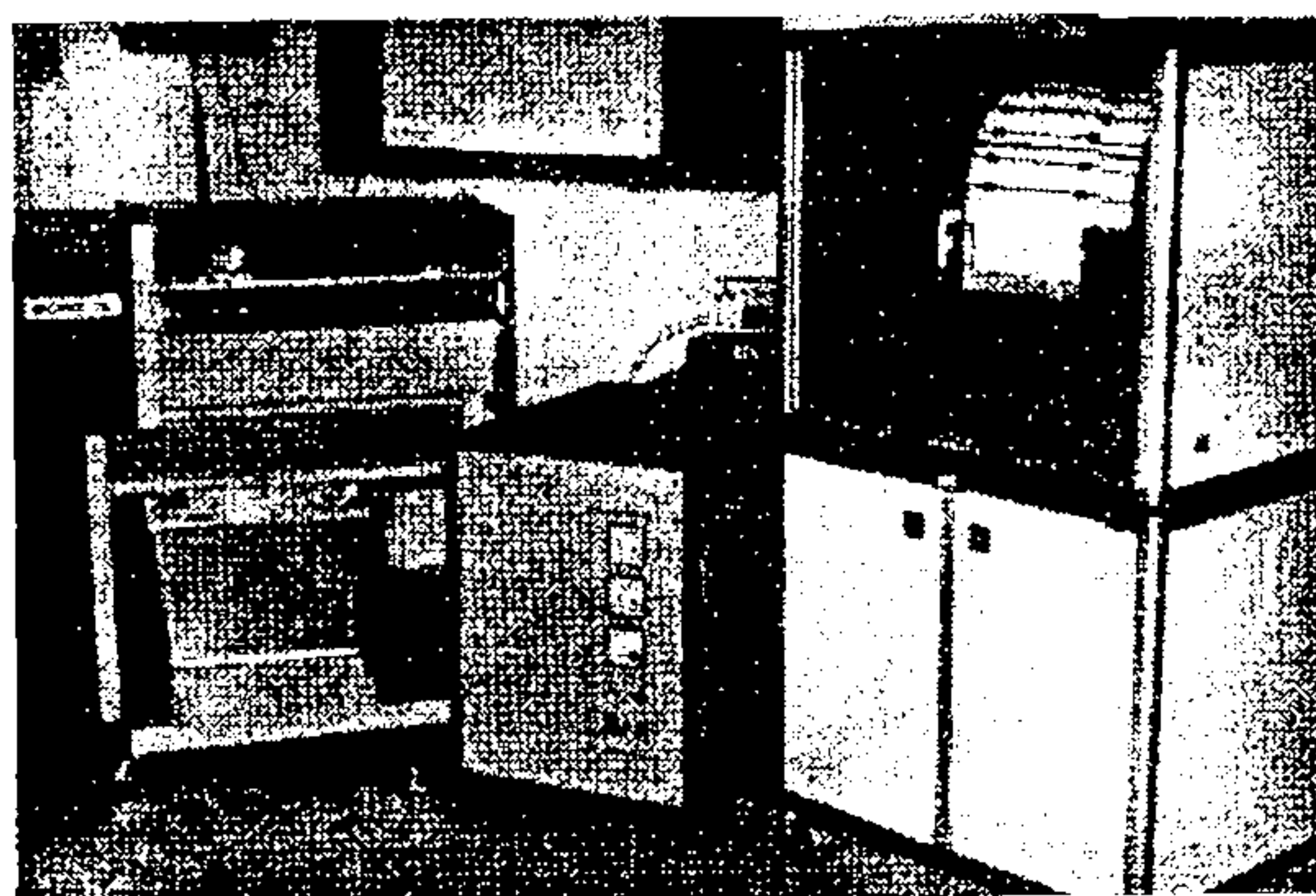


*Vocational skills being imparted to
blind students*



*Economy Oriented Rehabilitation Services,
Inauguration*

Computerized Braille Production Work



more than 3000 primary school children. By organizing this festival, the College establishes a close rapport with the schools adjoining Coimbatore. The *Physiotherapy Facility* of the College is also used by these schools.

The students of the three teacher preparation institutions have to stay in hostels. The 'hostel-living' provides the student-teachers with ample opportunities to develop social and moral values. The daily prayers in the morning and evening during the stay in the hostel help the students to imbibe the Indian spiritual traditions. The reading from the lives and message of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, quiz competitions, literary and elocution contests, and

youth camps form a part and parcel of the year-long activities of these institutions. In fine, the experience in the College and hostel during the teacher preparation course enables the student-teachers to cultivate a positive and noble outlook on life and teaching profession. The teacher preparation centres of the Vidyalaya have thus come out of the traditional responsibilities and have undertaken the lofty objective of improving the educational climate of the community itself. The educational policy perspectives such as 'school complex', 'school-community interaction', 'value development', etc. are in vogue in the Vidyalaya which is committed to constantly expanding the horizons of teacher preparation. □

A Journey to Mount Athos

(Continued from page 790)

ship room and sat next to me in the outside room so that he could explain to me in English the ceremonies which are conducted in the Greek language. Especially memorable is another act of his kindness on the morning when I was leaving Iveron for Karyes in order to catch the only bus for the port of Daphne. My companion and I were scheduled to start on our journey by foot at about 7:30 a.m., half an hour before the first meal service. At 7:00 Father Jacob came into our room and said, 'Our cook has prepared a lentil soup seasoned with Indian spices. He wonders whether you will have time to taste his preparation before you leave.' He ushered us into a small room next to the kitchen. On a table there waiting for us were two steaming bowls of lentil soup and a heapful of homemade bread. Given the strict eating rules of the monastery, I wondered how

daring must have been this clandestine operation. The cook monk did not speak English, but his face beamed with joy when we thanked him and bade him good-bye.

Do monasteries and monks who live in isolation serve any useful purpose for society? The affluent and the educated class in every country either seem to be sceptical or indifferent to monastic life. This is rather unfortunate. A close encounter with monastic life, however brief, will convince anyone that the life of an ascetic in spiritual quest is probably the hardest way of life. A monastery often serves as a repository of some ancient religious tradition and philosophy. Even more important are the products of a monastic environment. In the materialistic world, it is so heartening to see a few living models of wisdom, compassion, and basic human decency. □

Swami Brahmananda

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

In East Bengal

In January 1916 Brahmananda went to Dhaka with Premananda and a few other monks to lay the foundation stone of the Ramakrishna Math. On the way, they visited the holy temple of Kamakhya at Guwahati. He stayed there for three days and performed a special worship to the Divine Mother. Then the party stopped at Mymensing for five days. One day while walking on the bank of the Brahmaputra River, Maharaj exclaimed, 'My mind is merging into the Infinite.' On 13 February, after arriving at Dhaka, Maharaj laid the foundation stone of the Centre. One morning Maharaj said: 'Last night I saw the Master dancing here. The Master himself is preaching; we are only instruments.'

On their arrival at Dhaka, great enthusiasm was generated in that historic city. Many distinguished people and young students flocked to visit the disciples of Ramakrishna. Maharaj inspired and initiated many of them. He visited the ashrama of Vijaykrishna Goswami, and also Deobhog (Narayangunj), the birthplace of Saint Durga Charan Nag. Brahmananda was impressed with the rural beauty of the place and the devotion of the people.

When Brahmananda was at the railway station, waiting for the train to Calcutta, a young girl who was a devotee's sister bowed down to him and asked for some advice. Maharaj told her: 'Daughter, the train is coming. I don't have much time, but I will give you knowledge in one sentence: Read *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* regularly every

day. That is enough. You will find in this book the truth of all religions.'

In Puri and Bhubaneswar

Many times Brahmananda visited Puri, a lovely city on the coast of the Bay of Bengal. Once Sri Ramakrishna had advised Rakhal to go on a pilgrimage to Puri rather than to Gaya, because in Gaya he might merge into the divine and not return to the relative world. In Puri Brahmananda used to stay at Shashi Niketan, a retreat home of Balaram Basu. The holy shrine of Lord Jagannath (Krishna), the wholesome climate, and the panoramic view of the seacoast kept him in a highly spiritual mood. Quite often Brahmananda would experience ecstasy while visiting the deities — Jagannath, Balaram, and Subhadra (Krishna, his brother, and his sister) — in the inner sanctuary of the temple. One day he saw a cowherd boy in place of the deities; perhaps he saw his own real nature as the eternal companion of Krishna. During the Chariot Festival of Jagannath, according to custom, he would help pull the chariot containing Lord Jagannath's image. He experienced all-pervading consciousness in Puri and established a monastery at Chakratirtha, near the coast.

One day Atal Bihari Maitra, the deputy magistrate of Puri, said to Swami Sharvananda (a disciple of Maharaj): 'What kind of monks are you! You have no occult powers.' Hearing this Maharaj said: 'It is easy to get occult powers, but difficult to acquire purity of mind. It is this purity of mind that really matters.'

In 1917 while returning from Puri, Brahmananda stopped at Bhubaneswar to visit the famous Lingaraj Shiva temple. He stayed there three days and felt a wonderful spiritual atmosphere. He arranged to purchase a plot of land for a monastery. The monastery was dedicated on 31 October 1919. He commented: 'This place is very conducive to practising yoga. It is a place of Lord Shiva — a hidden Varanasi. Practising a little spiritual discipline here, one can accrue immense results. It is a healthy place. After getting tired from working in other places, the monks would come here to rest as well as practise meditation.' He also advised the householder devotees to build homes around the centre and to lead a quiet life in solitude.

Maharaj visited Bhubaneswar many times for health reasons, and also trained some monks in that isolated retreat. One day he reminisced about Sri Ramakrishna: 'The Master's body was so tender that once while breaking a *luchi* (crispy fried bread) his finger was cut.' At this a gentleman remarked: 'How is it possible for a person to cut his finger by breaking a *luchi*?' Brahmananda immediately became silent. If anyone interrupted him, his mood would break and he could not talk further.

In 1920 Pandit Kshirod Prasad Vidya-vinod went to see Brahmananda at Bhubaneswar. Kshirod lamented: 'There was a possibility of my seeing Sri Ramakrishna, but it was my bad luck that I did not. I was then a student. After hearing about the Master, one day I left for Dakshineswar. After arriving at Alambazar I thought: The Master knows what is in everybody's mind. If he exposes my secret thoughts in front of everybody, I will be embarrassed. This fear sent me back home.' Maharaj said, 'Since you went to Alambazar to see the Master, take it for granted that you did see him.' 'No, Maharaj, I did not see

him.' Remembering his bad luck, Kshirod bent his head and began to sob. As soon as he lifted his face, he saw Sri Ramakrishna seated in Brahmananda's place.

In Belur Math and Calcutta

Although Belur Math is the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order, Brahmananda was not there most of the time. He was busy founding new centres and inspiring monks and devotees. He handed the management of the daily activities to Premananda and Shivananda. When he stayed at Belur Math in between his travels, a festive mood would prevail among the monks. Many devotees and distinguished people would come to see him and receive spiritual instructions.

Brahmananda lived a God-intoxicated life, yet at the same time he knew what went on around him. He would supervise care of the trees, flowering plants, vegetable garden, and dairy; he would check the cleanliness of the shrine as well as the rooms of the monks; he would inquire about the health and spiritual progress of the monks and brahmacharins. He was a loving father, compassionate guru, and at the same time a stern taskmaster. He could not bear any lack of discipline among the monks. He reminded them: 'This is Swamiji's Math. If you cannot live according to his wishes, leave the monastery! Swamiji gave his very life to build this organization and to give you everything to facilitate your spiritual practice and growth. Try to realize the infinite love he bore for you.'

A monk recorded in his diary:

It is winter, December 1915. Nowadays Maharaj has made a rule that all monks and brahmacharins should rise at 4:00 a.m., and should sit for japam and meditation by 4:30 a.m. Some practise meditation in the shrine, some in Maharaj's

room, and others on the veranda facing the Ganges. An attendant of Maharaj has been entrusted with the duty of ringing a bell at ten minutes to four. Maharaj gets up about 3:00 a.m. His sleep is very short. After practising meditation for two to two and a half hours, all assemble in his room by 7:00 a.m., and sing devotional songs for about an hour. Then Maharaj gives spiritual instructions to all. He elevates the mind of each six or seven steps.

Brahmananda also taught the monks the secret of work:

Simply carrying out some undertaking is not sufficient. It must be done in the right spirit, knowing that one is serving the Lord without any personal motive. Keep three-fourths of your mind fixed on God, and with the remaining one-fourth do whatever you have to do. If you follow this method, you will be an ideal karmayogi and you will attain peace and joy. On the other hand, if you only get involved in activities without practising meditation, ego and pride will crop up and quarrels and dissensions will ensue, thus disturbing the equanimity of your mind. Therefore I tell you, stick to your sadhana by all means whether you work or not.... Each and every work is equally important — whether it is meditation or household duties. Do it with the right spirit. Work is worship.

One day Maharaj wanted to test the depth of the monks' morning meditation. He ordered each monk to peel a potato and bring it to him. He checked those potatoes, and then held one up and declared that the peeler of that one had had deep meditation. That person was Swami Shuddhananda, a disciple of Vivekananda. Maharaj noticed that he had removed the skin of the potato so neatly that no flesh was wasted.

One time a rich merchant lost his young wife. To assuage his grief, he came to Belur Math to live with the monks. After some time he felt uplifted by the influence of the holy company and decided to donate all of his money and his business to the Ramakrishna Mission. At that time the financial condition of the Order was poor. Premananda was moved by the donor's good intention, and he informed Maharaj of the offer. The farsighted Brahmananda realized that the merchant's renunciation was temporary, and that the Order would be in trouble if it accepted this donation. Without disclosing this insight, he told Premananda, with folded hands: 'Brother, having the company of the holy that man got renunciation, and having his company shall we be involved in the world?' Needless to say, the offer was not accepted.

There was a young monk in the monastery who was very obstinate and quarrelsome. One day Premananda forcefully took him to Brahmananda and said: 'Maharaj, this fellow is short-tempered, he quarrels with other monks and even with me. Please touch his head with your palm so that he can be freed from anger.' Maharaj jokingly said: 'Brother Baburam, today my palm is not good; you better put your palm on his head.' But Premananda insisted and pushed the monk's head near Maharaj's feet. His joking mood immediately disappeared. He became calm and serious. He began to rub the monk's head with his palm. Premananda then pushed the monk aside and placed his own head near Maharaj and requested him to touch it, which he did. Then Premananda loudly called to the other monks: 'Hello! Please come and take the blessings of Maharaj. He has become *kalpataru* [the wish-fulfilling tree] today.' All the monks, and even the servants, rushed to Brahmananda. A doctor devotee was in the bathroom; before he arrived Maharaj had gotten up from his seat. When Premananda asked Maharaj to

bless the doctor, he replied, 'The power that came has gone.'

One day Brahmananda told the monks about the supernatural power of a mantram. Swami Nikhilananda recalled:

Sri Ramakrishna taught Maharaj a mantram by repeating which one could bring a particular person to one's place. Many years later, Maharaj was at Belur Math when he heard of the arrival of a prominent Maharaja in Calcutta; there was no chance of the Maharaja's visiting Belur Math. Swami Brahmananda wanted to test the efficacy of the mantram taught him by the Master. He used it and within a short time the ruler of the native state sent his private secretary to the Math to find a convenient time for his visit there. Maharaj was pleased with the power of the mantram. But suddenly he remembered that the Master had asked him never to use it.

One day a devotee came to Belur Math and complained: 'Maharaj, I have visited this place for such a long time, still I feel that I am an outsider.' Maharaj indignantly told him to go whimper to Premananda. Later, in front of all the monks, he repeated what that devotee had said. Then Brahmananda said to the devotee: 'Do you know the purport of what you said? Go home and try to recapitulate it. Go to the Ghosh Sect [an esoteric tantric school], and you will get the result in three days. Be a devotee. Be a devotee.' Again, addressing Shivananda, Maharaj said: 'Sir, some people come here and complain that they have been coming to Belur Math for a long time and still they are not achieving anything. What does it mean?' Shivananda replied: 'They want more. Their stomachs are not yet full.' Maharaj said: 'It may be that the food has been supplied but has not reached their stomachs.' 'Yes, it may be possible,' replied Shivananda. Maharaj

indicated that that devotee would not have visited Belur Math the second time if he had not gotten anything.

One day Brahmananda said to M.: 'The Master came this time to make a bridge between Jiva and Shiva [human beings and God]. See how easy it has now become to realize the Lord!'

Brahmananda was a man of few words. His life was his teaching. Rather than preaching religion he demonstrated it. Swami Vasudevananda recalled:

It was 2:00 or 3:00 p.m. on a hot summer day. Swami Brahmananda was seated in his room at the Belur monastery. His attendant was fanning him. As soon as I entered his room he said: 'Welcome. It is very hot today. Let us meditate on the snow-clad Himalayas; then the whole atmosphere will be cool. Do you know this mystery? First empty the mind completely. There should not be any *samskaras* [impressions]. Then the mind will automatically fill itself with God-consciousness. When water is poured out of a pitcher, does the pitcher remain empty? At once it is filled with space. Didn't space exist in the pitcher before? Yes, it did. It existed mixed with water. We see only the gross water [and not the subtle space], so we think only the water exists. Similarly, although the impressions of external objects and Pure Consciousness are both in the mind, we perceive only the mind's gross impressions because they are within the reach of our senses. We do not see the Pure Consciousness, which is also in the mind.

'If one can make the mind free from impressions, Pure Consciousness, which is Satchidananda, will be immediately revealed. Otherwise, through discrimination one can get a little inkling of Satchidananda. One should discrimi-

nate, combining devotion and meditation, and then one will understand the real import of the scriptures, the teachings of the holy men and Sri Ramakrishna.

'Again, when a particular *sattvic* [good] impression is established in the mind, replacing other worldly impressions, then that established impression becomes luminous by the light of Brahman. At that time the snow-clad mountain turns into an effulgent form like the living Shiva, and that radiance of Shiva makes the body-mind organism of the meditator cool and calm.

'Thus, after cleansing the mind-lake, whatever ideal, or *Ishtam* [chosen form of God], you place there will be radiant and living. Brahman, the Pure Consciousness, cannot be reflected on a polluted, muddy mind-lake where many worldly waves are agitating.

'Now go ahead. I have given you a very secret teaching. Keep it secret and practise it wholeheartedly. Have you not read Sri Ramakrishna's parable of the wonderful tub of dye? Whenever the dyer was requested to dye a cloth a particular colour, he would dip it into that miraculous tub and it would immediately be dyed that colour. This mind-lake is like that wonderful tub of dye.'

During that time Belur Math was infested with mosquitoes. Maharaj suffered from malaria and typhoid fever. Once he remarked: 'I move around because of this horrible malaria! Otherwise who would want to stay away from this glorious monastery?... This Belur Math is like Kailash [the abode of Shiva]. Here the guru and the Ganges are present. Swamiji also left his body here. This is Vaikuntha [the abode of Vishnu].' Another time he said to Shivananda: 'Tarak-da, I shall never be able to cut my attachment for Belur Math. Even after my death I shall watch Belur Math from

above.' The damp climate and water of Belur Math did not suit Brahmananda, so from time to time he would stay at Balaram's house in Calcutta. Ramakrishna Basu, Balaram's son, was very devoted to Maharaj and served him wholeheartedly.

Many young people and devotees would come to Maharaj for his holy company and listen to his inspiring teachings. He was an awakener of souls. Sometimes he would remind the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna's message:

The Master often said, 'God can be attained if one loves him with the combined force of these three attractions: the chaste wife's love for her husband, the mother's love for her child, and the worldly man's love for worldly possessions....'

Sri Ramakrishna's message in this age is renunciation of lust and gold. [Pointing to the monks] You have joined the monastery in order to become holy men. Renunciation of lust and gold is the ornament of a holy man, and it is the only means of attaining God. As one progresses on the path of spirituality, one is confronted by many kinds of temptations. Cravings — such as for woman and gold, for name and fame — arise again and may lead one farther away from God. Unless you beware of this thief in the form of cravings he will steal all the goodness in you, and you will drown in the bottomless ocean of worldliness. But, on the other hand, there is the ocean of divine grace — if anyone will sincerely call on Him but once. The Master used to say: 'If you move one step towards Him, He comes down ten steps towards you.'

Swami Nirvanananda related a touching incident that took place in 1918 at

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Consciousness and the Public Conscience

PROF. MICHAEL NAGLER

Prof. Michael Nagler is an Emeritus Professor of Philosophy and Religion at the University of California at Berkeley in the Department of Classics. He is known as an authority on Ancient Greek Literature, one of the principal founders of the programme in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of California, a long-term student of meditation at the Blue Mountain Meditation Center and a consultant for President Clinton's U.S. Institute for Peace. What follows is the text of his speech at the AHIMSA 1994 conference 'In Search of Consciousness' held on 10 September 1994 at the University of California.

I am very delighted to be here at this conference to speak to you on this important topic. It is a very feelingful topic for me, even though we are addressing ourselves to what may be, in some ways, as Professor Huston Smith has already said, an essentially impossible task: that of seeking out what consciousness is—because in its very essence consciousness cannot be known as an object. I'm going to cross many disciplinary boundaries and perhaps make a fool of myself in so many ways at once, but to redeem myself at the same time I shall bring in a number of classical allusions to show the illumination which the ancients have to treat of this subject of consciousness.

Among the classical philosophers the most important one I want to mention is the Greek philosopher Epictetus. It will become clearer as we proceed why I feel this statement of his is so important. Epictetus was a slave brought to Rome. later freed, he studied philosophy and became a well-known philosopher in Rome and was frequently approached by his disciples with a problem. They felt that they were alright, but that the world was not alright, and they didn't know what to do about it—how, they asked, were they going to influence people? And Epictetus would reassure them saying that the only thing that they could control, and the only thing that they needed to control

was the imagery in their own mind. 'Control the imagery in your own mind and you have control of everything,' he said to them.

A second allusion, of which also as we move along will become more obvious why I'm mentioning now, comes from the Greek historian-philosopher Plutarch (2nd century c.e.). Plutarch said:

After all, the gods have given us a number of gifts. They've given us a certain amount of wealth. They've given us a planet whereon to live. They've given us also family connections, and a city; but there's one thing they've given us which is different from all their other gifts, and that is consciousness. (The Greek word was *neus*.)

The reason that consciousness was in principle different from all other gifts of the gods was that though they could give us other things, they could not *give* consciousness, they had to *share* that gift. When they open for us the way to the divine cognition they are sharing some of their being with us. That was the ancient's way of saying what we pointed out a few minutes ago: that consciousness is by its very nature participatory and cannot be known as an object. The problem is not with consciousness. The problem is with us. And as Professor Smith was leading up to, that element of *us-ness*, by which

we say that we are separate subjects *in here* cognizing something *out there*, the ancient Indians called *maya* or world-appearance. And it is at this point that we become incapable of knowing consciousness in the truest sense of the word.

We are here today because all of this seems to be changing. In the words of a friend of mine from Brooklyn named Bobby Zimmermann (who later changed his name to Bob Dylan and made lot of money), 'You know something's happening, but you don't know what it is, do you Mr. Jones!' (*laughter*) Well, we know something is happening, and part of it is quantum theory and part of it is called the Aquarian Age, and part of it is called 'God-knows-what'. But we don't know exactly what it is. So for my first act of supreme folly, I'm going to pole vault out of a field I know something about, ancient philosophy and classics, and give you my definition of what the quantum revolution is all about. (*Laughter*)

When we unconsciously perform that illusion of becoming separate subjects, and interact with what scientists today call the objective macro-cosmic world, the world which at a certain scale becomes indirectly cognizable through the sensorium and through our minds, we see the world as being inevitably within two categories, similar to the Kantian categories of space and time, but not exactly the same. We think that the world is continuous in time, but discontinuous in space. For example, if I have an intention to pick up this pen, and an intention to put it back down, we think that in doing this there is an unbroken continuous flow of intention and result, and that my picking up the pen and putting down here has absolutely nothing to do with that big blob that shot across the sky and made a lot of noise and light a few days ago, and has even less to do with things happening in remoter galaxies. But what scientists have discovered is that both of these fundamental characteristics of the world and our aware-

ness are wrong. Sorry about that, they say, but we had it completely backwards! Actually, the world is not continuous in time at all. It is broken up into quanta (which were called in ancient India *kshanam* or 'indivisible moments' of time, and in their terms of consciousness too. So that in between the time that I pick up this pen and put it down, as one poplizer of modern quantum theory has said, the universe is turning on and off at the speed of light. So it's some kind of incredible stroboscopic universe that we inhabit, and that can have important consequences for how we live, to which I am coming.

As for the other mistake, that we think the world is (in the jargon of quantum theory), local—that what is happening here does not affect what's happening in remote distances, that has actually been disproven right here at Berkeley, and I refer you to Professor Henry Staff up on the hill. In the Einstein, Podolski, Rosian experiment—talk about Jewish science!—(*Laughter*), three guys got together at Coney Island and doped out a way of proving that the universe has to be local, and when someone at Berkeley figured out a way to test it, it turned out—guess what—that they were wrong! Instead, every instant is essentially a unified participatory act of the entire universe, and the sum total of potentiality and awareness is re-represented simultaneously in that act.

Now let me start to focus on my subject, namely, 'Consciousness and Public Conscience'. When I first thought of this subject I was thinking of a French philosopher, Jaques Elieu (?) who wrote a book, *Contre le Violence* (Against the Violent Ones). In the book the author makes a very interesting remark. He says, somewhat provocatively at first: 'This is not the age of violence.' (*C'est n'pas l'age d'violence.*) Immediately, you may ask, 'What! Hasn't he been reading the newspapers recently?' He says no, this is not the age of violence. It is the age of *conscience*

de la violence (consciousness of violence) and the word *conscience* in French means both what we mean by consciousness and also what we mean by conscience, that is, the individual participation in what we might want to call moral awareness, or ethical awareness. And that sum-totality of awareness and potentiality which philosophers call consciousness, are the same in that word. And so there is the discovery happening in the domain of consciousness which we are going to be talking about today and on which Professor Smith has started us off so well. But there also has to be some awakening, we feel, of public consciousness, since looking into what is actually going on leads straight to the weapons labs and to disasters of various kinds.

I am reminded here of another classical person whom I dearly love even though in some ways he is not politically correct: St. Augustine. St. Augustine at one stage of his life 'woke up' and became rather upset with his education. He spends a lot of time in Books I to V of his *Confessions* talking about how he was dis-educated. And he recalls one particular moment about his education at a time in which the teaching was, basically, how to perform in a law court—today of course, it would mean how to perform in a corporation! (*Laughter*) Here he was being taught how to perform and they were coaching him. Now when you are going to seek a prosecution for someone for homicide, they coached him, be very careful and remember you are a North African 'yokel' and don't say here in Carthage '*omicide* the way your people do—say *homicide* the way they do in Rome! They drilled him and drilled him on this, and years later he reflected and said: 'Just imagine that they taught us with such great care, lest by a slip of the tongue we drop an *h* from the word homicide, but by the fury of the mind, that we were expelling a fellow human being from the community of the living, they taught us to pay no heed at all.'

So this is the missing element which I think we are all hoping will come somewhat more into focus as we pursue this search for consciousness.

Now the problem on our side, in the region of space-time that we inhabit in this civilization of ours, is that we have a revolution that hasn't happened yet. I mean the quantum explosion, which can be dated to approximately 1902, when Max Planck tried to figure out why a piece of metal goes from blue to yellow to red (or something like that), which 'didn't compute'. And he inadvertently discovered the quantum. So it's been around for just about a century. And my colleague, Professor Henry Staff, has written beautifully about what kind of difference this should mean for our life: it should *put the individual back in the picture*. It should be, in the terms of our discussion here this morning, *an awakening of conscience as much as it is of consciousness*. And yet we all know that that hasn't happened—on any level—even among professional physicists. I happen to be part of an on-going seminar with weapons-lab physicists and I have been very friendly with them and tried to raise with them at one time this question of quantum theory and what it should mean for what they are doing, and what I should be doing. And I found that they are very good at stopping discussions! All academics are, really. One of them, I recall, said laughingly: 'You know what I know about quantum theory—If I were driving a Quantum, I'd have to have a Quantum mechanic with me!'

The question on which we're really trying to focus is how to make the rest of that revolution happen. And I think that the solution of this agonizing search of ours will have to come from a merging of the best of two worlds of discovery: (i) our own—the way modern physicists have discovered the richness of matter; and (ii) the other—the essential characteristics of quantum theory, and what we call the new-physics, which were discovered by somewhat different

routes in ancient India possibly 5000 years ago. We all know about that ancient discovery of theirs, don't we?—let's assume that we do. I do think there was a difference between the way this was discovered there (in India) and the way it is being discovered here in the West; but somehow the solution is to get both of those together.

Let me illustrate what I mean by the difference. One of the big breakthroughs in the new-physics is that there is no subject and object duality. (I was having a discussion on it with some graduate students one time, and one said, 'If I were walking down the street and met a subject-object duality, how would I recognize it?' Of course, that's the superb subject-object-duality right there!) And Prof. Henry Staff has said flatly, that there definitely is no objective world. Forget it! We've been on a terribly wrong track. It is not to say that when a plane crashes, it's just your 'thought' or feeling about it that is the reality; but to think that you are going to understand the world by cognizing it as an external object, will not work because, frankly, there is no external object. We don't know how to explain it, but we have proved it. (The job description is to prove it, not to explain it!) (*Laughter*).

Now a very similar statement, but one that has a subtle difference, which I would like to quote to you from my favourite bedtime (*laughter*) reading, of which I have an abridged version here, is a text from ancient India called the *Yogavasishtha* which has been very well translated by two people: a Bengali scholar named Bose, whose book is out of print now, and Swami Venkateshanda. And thanks to the State University of New York, now many wonderful books are coming down the pipe from that tradition. I am citing this text today because as far as I know it is the most direct extensive articulate investigation of consciousness per se. And in Section 421, the sage who was dictating this material to his gifted divine pupil Rama, says 'Rama, bondage is none other

than the notion of an object.' You know, on one level he is saying very much the same thing as Henry Staff: there is no object, no objective world. Forget it! But he (the sage) is giving a slightly different English (slant) to it, which I think is characteristic of their (the Indian's) approach. So, it is to be noticed, in his very first word the ancient teacher is not just making a statement about the objective world, *but he is focusing on the human reality of this statement! Bondage!* So it's not just a mistake to think there is an objective world. It's not only a mistake, but there's a kind of existential bondage that comes from the illusion of that entrapment of separate individual versus an outside object.

Where in the West we are at our strongest is not on this side, but we are at our strongest in working out some of the mathematical formalism of these realities, and even some of the physiological formalism. I was at a conference a few years ago here in San Francisco where Karl Pribram and John Eccles and many distinguished brain physiologists were present, and they shared with us many amazing speculations on where in the body might be the contact point for mental activity. That is to say, there are certain cells and ganglia of the cerebral cortex where the ionization of a few atoms could create a cascade of neuronal activity and that could lead a professor emeritus here in Berkeley University picking up a pen and putting it down again. So this is where we are at our very very best—at discovering where that contact might be, even in terms of a physical map. But where we need some strengthening, I think, is in constantly grounding these discoveries in human realities.

To give you one example of how this can work: the discontinuous nature of time, which for them was a discontinuous nature of reality as a whole, including *primarily* the reality that we call consciousness, was well worked out as a theory of causality in Bud-

dhist schools who called the doctrine *kshanika-vada*, or the theory of momentariness, which states that there is no continuity between one *chitta-vritti* and the next, between one mental impulse and the next.

Now think of how significant that could be if that became a *living, lived* reality for us! To give an illustration: Let's say, I'm standing here giving this talk and let's say (which fortunately is not the case) that Huston Smith is smirking—he doesn't believe some of my theories. So that is one *chitta-vritti*. (Actually it may be an infinite number almost, but let us just say that it's one wave of thought.) But while I am sitting here and while I'm speaking to you, part of my mind (which is cut up into many compartments, thanks to my education) is saying: 'Eh! Huston doesn't like that, huh?' And then in the next *chitta-vritti* which seems so inevitably connected, I start to get defensive, saying to myself: 'Well, what's wrong with this? I've done a lot of work preparing this stuff!' And, Godforbid, I might even take the next step—(all unconsciously, and in an instant)—and start saying to myself: 'Well! let's see about some of *his* theories, maybe I don't like *them*!' You see? And then you get into what Zorba the Greek called 'the whole catastrophe!' (*laughter*), *the whole human disaster of entanglement and conflict comes up because of this illusion of the continuous nature of our mental processes*. In fact, I would go so far as to say that the mind is essentially the illusion of the continuity of mental processes.

Now if I can experience the discontinuity of these processes, I can take whichever route I choose. I can say, 'Well, Huston knows what he's talking about, he's done some good work, and he has a right to his beliefs, and maybe I should examine some of them, etc.' ...And you're on your way out of the 'whole catastrophe'!

I would like to read to you two other quotes from the *Yogavasisltha* which follow very closely on the first one that I just men-

tioned: 'Bondage is none other than the notion of an object', because my final point will be that there had to be three components of this breakthrough in order for consciousness (Fr. *conscience*) to come together. The second quote follows inevitably and intuitively from the first: '*He sees the truth who sees all beings in the three worlds as his own family deserving his sympathy and protection.*' (So here we get to the *ahimsa* part of this A.H.I.M.S.A. Conference!)

Inevitably there must be a connection between the new discoveries that we are making about the universe and the way we live as human beings. And that connection must be along these lines—that we must be discovering our essential connectedness as living beings. Having outlined all of this sage Vasishtha goes on to conclude: '*Hence, the wise man grinds his teeth and strives to conquer the mind and the senses. Such a conquest is far greater than the conquest of external foes.*'

The reason I chose these three quotes is that I think there are three components to the advance that we are all hoping now to achieve. The first, which we've done a lot on already here in the West especially, is what you might call 'right theory' or right intellectual formulation. I think the discoveries that have been made in the 20th century by western scientists, particularly in theoretical physics, but also fanning out into other disciplines, have been some of the great achievements of human civilization and are giving us a much better orientation, if we would take it, to reality than the Cartesian model that has brought us all this expensive machinery.

So that's the first step, and I need to say least about that. I've touched on the second, which is the question of *re-humanization* or human awareness. I think part of the reason that Huston Smith was sharing with us that anecdote about the plane crash is that because something like that shocks us out of our separate consciousness and makes us aware that we are all part of a human family,

and so this triumphalism about the conquest of others is something about which I've observed people actually feel terribly unhappy in their conscience, but because television tells them to enjoy it and never to think about consciousness and mind, they never can make that awareness come real for themselves. And, third and finally, we have to grind our teeth, as the text says there. There has to be a method—a right formulation, a re-humanization and a method to make this real for us.

The reason is this: that one of the convergences of these two modes of discovery—the Western and the Indian—has been the re-discovery of the significance of the individual. In India there was a motto that Gandhiji liked to quote: '*Yat piṇḍe, tat brahmāṇḍe.*' Anything which exists in potential in the individual, be it in a *kshanam* of time or a *kshanam* of space—anything that is in the individual is latent in the universe as a whole.

Now what that doctrine means is (to paraphrase our friend Epictetus): 'Only the individual *can* awaken conscience, and only the individual *needs* to awaken conscience.' That's all. We don't have to go out and organize it (which is something we are very good at), because there is no limit to the impact that we might have on the world by simply doing it.

I'm right now involved in the creation of a P.B.S. documentary—this is part of my karma, since I've been talking against television so long and so ardently! We are beginning this film series with an incident in which some marchers in Birmingham during the Civil Rights movement were stopped by police and firemen, taken quite unawares. They knelt down on the sidewalk to pray, and there, as they said, they became spiritually intoxicated and as though by a pre-arranged signal they decided they would not retreat. They stood up and walked towards the wall of police and dogs and guns and firemen (and behind them all

the rednecks and so forth), and the sheriff, who was in charge, who was a notorious segregationist, said, 'Turn on the fire hoses'—and guess what?—the firemen found that they were not able. They were not able; something in them prevented them from doing what they were ordered to do, and what by ideology they were prepared to do, and wanted to do. They couldn't do it. And the marchers just walked right through them, and spoke to them asking them about how they felt about what they were doing, and so on. And some of the marchers observed that the police and firemen were crying as they walked through them. And I use this episode in the film and in my non-violence class because it shows so well that the awakening of conscience in the individual awakens conscience in other individuals. So I would like to close with four outrageous suggestions that seem to follow from what I have been saying so far.

First, that in everything we do as an individual we should not only have an E.I.R.—an Environmental Impact Report, but we should have an M.I.R.—a Mental Impact Report. Remember Epictetus: How is this going to affect my conscience-consciousness, and therefore how is it going to affect the conscience-consciousness of others!

Second, immediately cease and desist from all television watching. As I was coming to this Conference today, I found myself following a van that had written on it a big sign: 'Kill your television'. Well, it may not be the right approach, but generally the spirit is right.

Third and fourth, bringing us closer to our position in an academic institution, is to reverse some of the dis-educational treatment of the mind, and here I'm not referring to what we put in the mind, but how we train the mind to respond. The fact that we break it up and fragment it, and treat everything with such trivialization and superficiality, is changing the very nature of the mind and making it an even more dense barrier

between ourselves and awareness, making us harden as separated individuals.

And finally, I would leave you with the inflammatory thought that we should *take back* this university. Education has nothing to do with making money. That has been completely wrong.

Things are improving, however, and I would like to close by sharing one element of my experience with you in this regard. Twenty-five years ago I had the great privilege of sponsoring a course in meditation on this campus for credit. It was a daring thing to do in those days—to have students (and their dogs) actually meditating in the classroom. But now, twenty-five years later, the students have their own student-initiated course in meditation and it is popular. □

Swami Brahmananda

(Continued from page 799)

Balaram’s house. One day after lunch, when Brahmananda was about to rest, a teenage girl came with her brother to see him. When Nirvanananda told this to Maharaj, he said that he could see her at 4:00 p.m. But when the girl insisted, Maharaj allowed her to see him in his room. As soon as she saw him, she began to weep. Then pointing to a picture of Sri Ramakrishna, she said, ‘He has asked me to come to you.’ Maharaj said to her affectionately, ‘Tell me what has happened, my child.’

Then she told her story. She had been married at the age of fourteen, and her husband died only two weeks after their marriage. (In India at that time this was a disastrous situation. A Hindu widow could not remarry and had to depend on her husband’s family for the rest of her life.) Faced with this gloomy future, she wholeheartedly prayed: ‘O Lord, what will become of me? I am so lonely and helpless. What shall I do? Please show me the way.’ After a year or so, one night Sri Ramakrishna appeared to her in a dream and said: ‘Don’t weep. My son Rakhal is living in Baghbazar. Go to him. He will help you.’ She had never heard of Ramakrishna or Rakhal.

Without telling her in-laws about the dream, she came to visit her mother in Tollygunj, in South Calcutta. Her mother knew about Sri Ramakrishna. Directed by her mother, she went to Saradananda at Udbodhan, and he sent her to Maharaj. The girl was with Maharaj for two hours and during that time he initiated her. He then asked Nirvanananda to feed the girl and her brother. The girl later became a nun and established a convent.

(to be continued)

CENTENARY OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION 1897–1997

All-India Youth Convention at Belur Math:	3 & 4 February 1998
Admission Fee for each delegate	Rs. 100
Food and Accommodation (for resident delegates)	Rs. 200
Concluding Programme for devotees at Belur Math:	7 & 8 February 1998
Food and Accommodation (for members of General Committee)	Rs. 300
For additional information, please contact: ‘Mission Centenary’, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta 700029	

Reviews and Notices

REMINISCENCES OF THE FIERY AGE; Prasanta Kumar Sarkar; publ. Bandi Ram Sarkar, 34 Kalitola Lane, Howrah 6; to be had of New Book Stall, 5/1 Ramanath Majumdar Street, Calcutta 700 009 and others; 1995; pp. 241; Rs. 150/-.

The book has been introduced by Swami Lokeswarananda, Secretary, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta 700 029, as 'an account of a revolutionary's life and activities' with reference to many events and persons, mostly unknown or forgotten. Debojyoti Burman, editor of *Yugabani*, who has contributed the Preface of the book, published *The Memoirs of His Rebel Days* by Prasanta Kumar Sarkar in four installments in his paper. Now, the memoirs have been published in book form in the name 'Reminiscences of the Fiery Age'. Professor Nemaï Sadhan Bose has written the Foreword. Dr. Gouripada Chatterjee, Senior Research Fellow (History) of the University Grants Commission, has presented the Prologue.

Prasanta Kumar Sarkar was inspired by the ideals of Swami Vivekananda. He was specially influenced by the revolutionary zeal of Bepin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh. He was a firebrand revolutionary. In the book under review, the author presents his revolutionary life in relation to his fearless comrades who rendered selfless service to achieve independence for India. In the book we get many unknown and unspoken of episodes, invaluable materials of India's struggle for freedom which will help in furnishing a comprehensive picture of the revolutionary movement in Bengal as well as that in the rest of India. We should not forget that India was freed not only by the activities of the non-violent fighters but also by the revolutionary movement. We get a picture of the revolutionary movement and the activities of the nationalist revolutionaries of Bengal in the book under review. The revolutionaries were idealists wedded to moral and spiritual values. In the context of the present day moral decadence, the story of the revolutionaries may inspire our younger genera-

tion to cultivate respect for values in life, such as service and sacrifice. Prasanta Kumar has rendered a great service to the society through his *Reminiscences of the Fiery Age*.

The author is right when he observes: 'The tale of Indian freedom movement is a tale of unsurpassed violence, sacrifice, courage and prowess of innumerable young Indians whose blood has left an indelible mark on our country's historical annals....They deserve much greater degree of homage than we have paid them.'

Many appendixes and a bibliography have added to the wealth of the book. We recommend its wide circulation for the good of our country and specially for our younger generation.

THE BHAGAVAD-GITA; (With English Rendition and Commentary) Dr. Ramananda Prasad; publ. The American Gita Society, 511 Lowell Place, Fremont, California 94536-1805 U.S.A.; also available at Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007, Second Edition 1996, pp. 329, Rs. 150/-.

The Bhagavad-Gita (The Song of God) is one of the basic scriptures of the Hindus. It ranks next only to the Vedas and the Upanishads. In fact, it is the essence of the Upanishads, as has been mentioned in the couplet, 'All Upanishads are (like) milch cows and Gopala milks them. Gita is the nectarine milk.' Though Gita is a part of the narration of the Mahabharata, it has its own identity and epitomizes Hindu philosophy. Being non-sectarian, it has a universal appeal. It educates one in maintaining one's equipoise when placed in one or the other of a number of conflicting life situations. The text, in Sanskrit, has been widely translated in various languages of the world.

The book under review presents the original Sanskrit text and its Roman transliteration. All the original stanzas have been rendered into lucid English. The originality of the author/compiler lies in providing a suitable gloss on all the important stanzas. While doing this, he has

drawn upon authentic sources of Indian philosophy and history, and has juxtaposed quotes from the teachings of other religions. The author has an eye for parallels from the Koran, the Bible, and the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. All these are highly useful to the genuine student of the Gita.

Thus, we find on p. 72, the author has, while glossing on the stanza 4:34, cited the *Rg-Veda* (9.70.09) and (8.01.05), *Br. Up.* (4.01.02), and collated the message in this stanza with Tulasidas, Krishnamurti and others. The author has given practical hints on Karma, Jnana, meditation and sannyasa. On p. 328, we find an elaborate list of world teachers whose thoughts and teachings run parallel to the teachings of the Gita. The author has taken care to use the original Sanskrit words for complicated ideas in the spiritual domain and has added an elaborate glossary at the end. These will be of great help to all ardent students of the Gita.

The author/compiler, Dr. Ramananda Prasad, is an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, and of the University of Toronto and is a Ph.D. in Civil Engineering. He is currently attached to the Western Division of U.S. Navy. His work experience has added a lot to his understanding of the Gita and his explanations of its verses. The author's spirit of synthesis is eloquent in these pages. About 133 important stanzas of the Gita have been printed in this book in red ink. This will help the reader in concentrating his efforts on these stanzas. He has commented in the fashion explained above on 227 key verses and his comments are quite concise and pointed.

Any serious reader of the Gita would find this book useful and rewarding.

Dr. Narendranath B. Patil, Mumbai

GĀYATRĪ MAHĀ MANTRA THE EPITOME OF VEDAS (Series 1); Kalluri Suryanarayana; publ. Sankhyayana Vidya Parishat, H. No. 2-12-34, Annapoorna Colony, Uppal, Hyderabad 500 039; 1996; pp. 124; Rs. 144/-.

One receives the Gāyatrī Mahāmantra at the time of the *upanayana saṁskār*. Repetition of the *mantra* is obligatory on all those who have undergone this *saṁskār*. This *mantra* is to be repeated thrice a day, at least both in the morning and the

evening. Most of the initiates do not know anything beyond this, concerning this *mantra*. Shri K. Suryanarayana has painstakingly collected all the ancillary information about this *mahāmantra* and organized it in five chapters in this book.

The author authoritatively states that Gāyatrī removes frustration in life and instils confidence in the person who chants this *mantra* daily. Thus, the incantation of this *mantra* with proper intonation is wish-fulfilling and is bound to kindle faith, leading to the vision of God. The author further lays down the doctrine of Gāyatrī with supporting references from *Śadvimśa Brāhmaṇa* and *Ṣaṁmukhābhidhāna*. He cites from *Rgvidhāna* and states that a Brahmin should take refuge in Gāyatrī and save himself from contamination in the Kali yuga. The Gāyatrī Mahāmantra is equated with the four Vedas. Further, the author narrates the procedure of Gāyatrī prāṇāyāma. The second chapter deals with the salient features of *upanayana* and draws extensively from the Purāṇas about the efficacy of the *mantra*.

In a subsequent chapter, the author has quoted in brief the views of not only ancient sages but of comparatively recent great men, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Lokamanya Tilak, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Rabindranth Tagore, and Aurobindo. The last chapter refers to Gāyatrī vis-a-vis other *mantras*.

The author mentions on p. 119 'the human mind unlike the body which has mortal cells is encompassed by immortal atoms. During Gāyatrī recitation the devotee's mind perceives its atomic nuclei in such a way as to enable them to collide and interact with the protons that emanate from the Solar symbol of the Godhead. The letter *dhiyah* represents mass, *blargah*, the velocity of light, when these two are multiplied by squaring with *vareṇyam* the *sadhaka* canalises the energy of the life sustaining Savitā and this leads to the union of Jivātmā and Paramātmā. This is the merging of the unit energy into universal energy.' It is for readers to test its veracity. The Sanskrit quotations in the book have become faulty due to printing mistakes. The entire material could have been organized in a better way. The author intends to publish further series on Gāyatrī. It is hoped that due care will be taken to present the material with minimum errors. Even otherwise, this book would be found useful only by those who desire to know more about this *mahāmantra*.

Dr. Narendranath B. Patil

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